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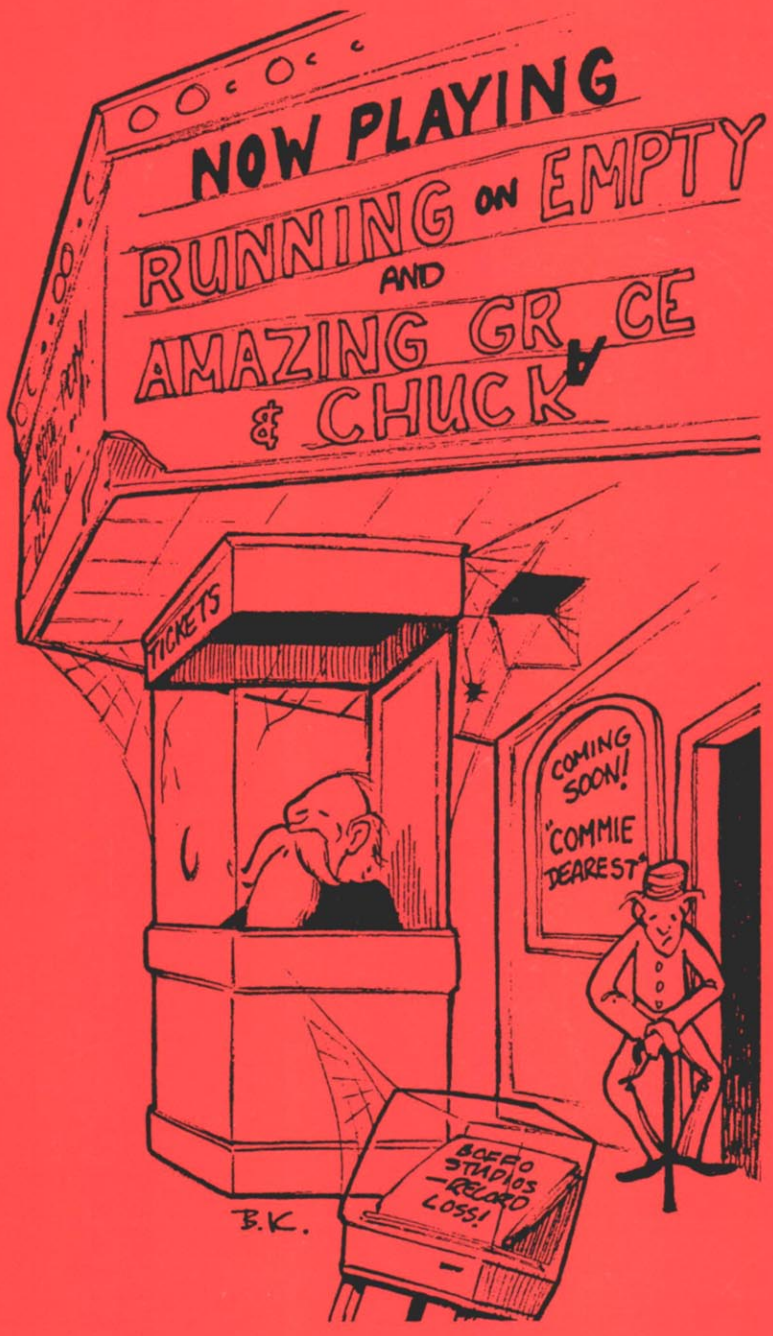
California Political Review

Hollywood's Strange Compulsion

Why the Film Industry Tilts to the Left

by Michael Medved



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Irvine Bids the Evil Emperor *Adieu*

Sacramento Bids a New Editor *Bonjour*

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Vol. 1, No. 3 *A Publication of the California Public Policy Foundation* Summer 1990

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California Political Review

Summer 1990

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Correspondence

Heritage Approves

I enjoyed #2. Well done!

Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., president
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Congratulations on the second issue of *California Political Review*. I enjoyed reading it.

CPR is a good blend of California and national/general issues. I'm sure that over time you will build a larger stable of California writers to cover state topics more broadly. For example, a regular column on the doings in Hollywood would be dandy. You have the "Sacramento Spectator"; why not a "Hollywood Voyeur"? All the best!

Charles Heatherly, vice president
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Heatherly seems almost clairvoyant. See Michael Medved's cover article in this issue. A regular feature is under consideration.

Editor

Woeful Predictions

Congratulations on your new magazine. It looks good and I'm happy to subscribe.

Here's a prediction:

The California Republican Party is going to lose BIG in November.

We're going to lose the governor's race. We're going to have a net loss in both the Senate and the Assembly. We're going to crash and burn all the way around.

The biggest reason is the abortion issue. The Right-to-Life folks are going to cost us elections in every quarter. There is no way that, as a party, we can survive them. Somebody better put a lid on those folks and explain to them that their only hope of getting even pieces of their agenda into law is to lie back in the weeds, keep quiet, and don't let the Republican Party or its candidates get tagged with their support. In the end, they will never get everything they want. But they can get pieces of it by shutting up and backing off. If they continue to raise hell in public, they will lose everything. And so will the entire Republican Party.

Jim Schefter
Playa del Rey, CA

Taking the High Ground

If recent political history teaches us only one lesson, it is that conservatives are ill-served when they seek political guidance by looking to the media or to special interests or sundry other groups who would see conservatism halted posthaste. The left's stereotyped conservative is a heartless, greedy glutton who "cares" only for the bottom line. Consistently emphasizing the practical superiority of conservative policies (they *work*) without talking about their moral superiority actually seems to confirm the left's phony version of conservativism.

Your Commentary piece about Tom Hayden's "Big Green" initiative ("Separating Good and Evil," *CPR*, Spring 1990), for example, makes just the right points in emphasizing our moral arguments.

Made comfortable by years of Reagan-led success, conservatives must snap out of the lull and, as *CPR* advises, "make central to their argument the moral power of conservative convictions." Yes, we must oppose the potentially ruinous initiative, but not because it is authored by Hayden and John Van de Kamp (although that should be reason enough). Conservatives must articulate their opposition on moral grounds.

If conservatives are ever to achieve success, they must never fear pointing out what is right and just and what is not.

Jonathon R. Wilcox
Pasadena, CA

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California Chronicles

John Gurley, editor

California Chronicles reports on current activities and projects of conservative leaders and organizations around the Golden State.

Rep. David Dreier

Capital Gains
The Tax Reform Act of 1986 eliminated the distinction between long-term capital gains and ordinary income. Under the old law, 60 percent of capital gains from assets held at least six months could be excluded from taxable income.

Rep. David Dreier of Covina recently introduced legislation that would restore the distinction saying, "It is clear that the elimination of the tax differential on capital gains poses a substantial threat to the health of our economy and competitive position by discouraging capital formation and entrepreneurship."

In addition to restoring the exclusion, Dreier's proposal would adjust gains and losses for inflation at the time of sale for determining tax liability. Dreier said U.S. capital gains taxes are among the highest of the major industrial countries and that Japan and Germany enjoy a significant competitive advantage over the United States as a result of their more favorable treatment of capital gains.

Housing
As housing becomes increasingly expensive in California, Dreier is fighting to reduce the costly burden of government red tape on home builders that ends up being paid by home buyers and renters. Dreier identifies "barriers like exclusive zoning, regressive property tax burdens, complex building codes, rent controls, and excessive fees" as among the avoidable causes of spiraling housing costs and the housing shortage.

"Local government regulation can add 25 percent or more to the cost of housing. In Orange County, for example, it adds about $50,000 to the cost of a house before the first spadeful of dirt is turned over," Dreier said.

The congressman recently attempted to introduce federal legislation that would have required local jurisdictions to identify impediments to affordable housing at the local level. Democrat party leaders in Congress, however, refused to allow the proposals a floor hearing.

Dreier is now preparing to introduce an even more comprehensive version of the legislation and is supporting the Bush administration's Blue Ribbon Commission to be convened by HUD Secretary Jack Kemp to identify and help remove such barriers to affordable housing. Contact: Brad Smith, press secretary, 410 Cannon Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, 202/225-2305.

Rep. C. Christopher Cox

The Federal Budget
In an effort to create more congressional accountability and make the budget process work better, Rep. Chris Cox of Newport Beach has proposed that spending ceilings be set in 19 major categories of the federal budget. The ceilings would reflect the level of taxes and other revenues collected by the government so lawmakers would know at exactly what point spending levels begin enlarging the deficit. The detailed federal budget could not be submitted until after Cox's ceilings were set.

Subsidies for Iraq
Rep. Cox wrote in an article appearing recently in California newspapers that six days before Iraq invaded Kuwait, "Republicans and Democrats alike took the floor of Congress to oppose even the mildest sanctions against Iraq, which by that time had amassed 30,000 troops on its border with Kuwait."

Cox was lobbying against U.S.-subsidized agricultural loans for Iraq that totalled $1 billion in 1989 and $500 million so far this year. Though these kinds of subsidies are unavailable even for the Soviet Union, Cox's pleas that Saddam Hussein's already atrocious human rights record and military buildup should disqualify him from fa-

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vored treatment failed to convince 175 of his colleagues who voted to continue them.

The amendment Cox supported was passed in the final vote. Iraq is now off the loan subsidy list, but, as the congressman wrote in his article, "the substantial support for taxpayer-guaranteed loans...speaks volumes about the dominance of domestic political expediency over national security interests in Congress." Contact: Peter Slen, press secretary, 510 Cannon Building, Washington, D.C. 20515, 202/225-5611.

Pacific Legal Foundation

Property Rights
Pacific Legal Foundation, after filing a friend of the court brief and participating in oral arguments in *Rooke v. City of Scotts Valley*, helped Donald and Marjorie Rooke win their appeal upholding "the right of private citizens to sue for damages when their property is 'taken' by unconstitutional regulations."

Scotts Valley had passed an ordinance that severely restricted the right of owners to convert mobile home parks to any other use, in effect making it impossible for them to go out of business without forfeiting the value of their property. The California Sixth District Court of Appeals agreed with PLF that not only was the city ordinance unconstitutional, but that the Rookes were entitled to compensation from the city as well for the temporary "taking" of their property. PLF attorneys pointed out that this decision "confirms a national trend toward closer judicial scrutiny of economic regulations." Contact: Linda Hellakson, 2700 Gateway Oaks Dr. #200, Sacramento, CA 95833, 916/641-8888.

Oregonians for Educational Choice

Open Enrollment
Prominent Californians, including Hoover Institution Senior Research Fellow Milton Friedman and Basic American Foods Chairman Jerry Hume, are actively supporting the next best thing to a California effort for Parental Choice in Education by aiding such a drive by our northern neighbors. Oregonians have placed an amendment to their state Constitution on the November ballot. If adopted, this initiative would allow statewide open enrollment and a tax credit for parents who enroll their children in a system of alternative education.

In a letter to the initiative's backers, Friedman wrote that the measure, if successful, would have the monumental effect of

"transferring financial control from bureaucrats to parents....

"It will be fought tooth and nail by the educational bureaucracies and teachers' unions — though not by parents, students or teachers themselves. If you can overcome the opposition, you will make a major contribution to the future welfare of the citizens of the United States." And, perhaps, provide a useful example for the citizens of California about how to end, and then reverse, the long decline of public education. (See, also, "...and Oregon Runs With It" in this issue's Commentary section, page five.) Contact: Steve Buckstein, Outreach Coordinator, Oregonians for Educational Choice, P.O. Box 40748, Portland, OR 97240, 503/242-0168.

The Independent Institute

Antitrust
In the second edition of *Antitrust And Monopoly: Anatomy of a Policy Failure*, published by the Independent Institute, Dominick T. Armentano argues that government, rather than the market, is the ultimate source of monopoly. The book's first edition, published in the early 1980s, is widely recognized as one of the best critiques of antitrust policy available. Antitrust restrictions, the book shows, on price reductions, price discrimination, and tying agreements have all served to protect inefficient competitors and harm consumers. Deregulation, not antitrust, is the road to efficient markets. 306 pp., $19.95. Contact: The Independent Institute, 134 Ninety-Eighth Ave., Oakland, CA 94603, 415/632-1366. CPR

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Commentary

Honig Makes a Point...

A REVEALING lesson about conflicting incentives may be learned from the inconsistent behavior of California's Schools Chief Bill Honig in his roles as (a) superintendent of public instruction and (b) a father of a school-aged child.

In his official capacity, Honig has more or less consistently opposed all but the most limited freedom for parents to choose the schools their children will attend, preferring instead to follow for the most part the position of the California Teachers Association. CTA, for one thing, opposes allowing parents to send their kids to schools outside the district in which they live, a position Honig publicly supports.

But as a parent, Honig reportedly packed his son off to live with friends in the nearby community of Fremont, thus allowing the young Honig to attend school not in the San Francisco Unified School District, but in a neighboring district in another city. Leaving aside speculation about the superintendent's reasons for these actions, the point remains that Honig appears to have found a way to do for his child what he would not allow other parents to do for theirs.

THE CASE provides a dramatic demonstration of the differences between the incentives of the bureaucrats and politicians who run our schools and those of the parents who should be running them. As one of the highest-level elected Democrats in California state government, Honig must, before supporting or opposing particular policies, take into account all sorts of peculiar considerations — everything from Willie Brown's reaction to that of major newspapers' editorial boards and of a very long list of other politicians, special interests, potential financial contributors, and so on. In addition, as top education bureaucrat, Honig must weigh the results of his taking a public position in terms of the vast bureaucracy that roils and churns beneath his presiding eye: so many power clusters, so many authority structures, so many vested interests with critical stakes in preserving or altering the status quo.

But as a parent, Honig is blissfully free of all these burdensome cares and woes. All he need think about is how best to see to the education of his boy. That is the case for educational choice as neat as it comes. Choice puts parents in charge. Parents' only interest is in finding the best education available for their children. When schools are free to serve parents, and to forget about the vast political and bureaucratic power structures towering over them now, quality education will similarly become the schools' sole interest and quality education will be the result.

...and Oregon Runs With It

CALIFORNIANS MAY soon have an additional lesson on a much larger scale than that provided by Bill Honig in the advantages of allowing parents to choose their children's schools. Oregonians have qualified an educational choice initiative for their November ballot that has earned the support of prominent Californians, including Nobel Laureate and Hoover Institution Senior Research Fellow Milton Friedman. If it passes, the comparisons and contrasts then to be drawn between our schools and theirs should be highly informative.

"The most extensive socialist sector in the U.S. economy," Friedman wrote to the initiative's sponsors, "is elementary and secondary education and, as in socialist institutions everywhere, the result is overall failure, but with high quality and expensive schooling for the privileged few." Friedman goes on to urge "transferring financial control from bureaucrats to parents" and says the initiative, if passed, "would be a major step in achieving such a reform."

THE OREGON Educational Choice Initiative, as backers are calling the proposition, would mandate statewide open enrollment for the state's public schools and provide a tax credit worth a maximum of $2,500 to cover the expenses of educating a child outside the public system. The credit, by the way, is a profitable proposition for the public schools since average school district costs per pupil are $5,000. That means a child enrolling in alternative education would bring the system a net savings of at least $2,500.

The important benefit, however, of educational choice is that, unlike virtually every other reform urged upon school systems — magnet schools, school-based management, teacher training, stricter accountability, and, especially, bigger budgets — parental choice ends

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bureaucracy's stranglehold on education; it eliminates the "socialist" aspect to which Friedman referred.

JOHN E. CHUBB, a Brookings Institute senior fellow, and Stanford Political Science Professor Terry Moe, formerly also of Brookings, wrote a book called *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, in which they analyzed 500 public and private high schools based on information gathered from more than 20,000 students, teachers, and principals. They concluded that:

"The fundamental causes of poor academic performances are not to be found in the schools, but rather in the institutions by which the schools have traditionally been governed. Reformers fail by automatically relying on these institutions to solve the problem — when the institutions are the problem." The solution is to dismantle the institutions and replace them with the institutions of freedom — a market system in which consumers (parents and students) decide what they wish to buy and in which producers (educators) retain the freedom to be creative in meeting the endlessly-varied individual requirements of teaching students well.

Educational choice is one of those rare policies supported by liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats — some Democrats, anyway. In Wisconsin, the leader of a successful effort to have that state adopt educational choice is Rep. Annette "Polly" Williams, a black Democrat who was Jesse Jackson's state chairman in 1984 and 1988. With the support of Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson, praise from President George Bush, and the help of 200 Milwaukee parents who stormed legislative committee hearings to demand that they be allowed to choose the schools their children attend, Williams shepherded her "Education Enterprise Zone" legislation to victory.

"MONEY TALKS," Rep. Williams said. "For the first time, poor people will get respect because they can take their $2,500 to a school of their choice and say, 'I want my children educated.' The Milwaukee schools ask for more money each year, blame the students and say they can't learn. But the problem is the schools can't teach. These schools have to change."

Educational choice is also wildly popular with the voters — by a two-to-one margin, as reported by Gallup last year — something California's politicians should note, especially Pete Wilson. In the meantime, keep your eye on Oregon.

Harold Nelson's Age of Uncertainty

THE FURIOUS denunciations that have greeted even the mildest efforts — Rep. Dana Rohrabacher's, for instance — to define what the National Endowment for the Arts means when it uses the word "art" have shown that at least one certainty remains iron-clad in what John Kenneth Galbraith called our "Age of Uncertainty." That single surviving dogma is that all questions must be treated as open questions, except, of course, the question whether all questions *are* open questions. If that sounds confused, don't worry; it's supposed to sound that way, confusion being the preferred condition of the mind among relativists. The so-called "arts community"'s lockstep conformity with this dogma and the frenzied indignation its minions display in dealing with anyone transgressing it can be stunning to observe.

For instance, Mr. Harold Nelson, director of the Long Beach Museum of Art and treasurer of a political action committee set up to oppose Rohrabacher's reelection this year, expressed his disagreements with the congressman about the proper scope of projects the NEA should fund in the following terms:

"People in this district have sat back and listened to the rantings and ravings of this extremist long enough. Now we're going to do something about it."

Of course, most of us are by now accustomed to observing liberals turn bright blue and lose themselves in mindless vitriol whenever they think they've discovered someone slipping into forbidden opinions, partic-

If Drug Education Were Taught Like Sex Education by permission of the Colo. Spgs. Gazette Telegraph

I WOULD LIKE TO ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU NOT TO USE DRUGS AT ALL, BUT SINCE THIS IS A PUBLIC SCHOOL AND I'M NOT ALLOWED TO INFLICT MY OWN PURITAN BELIEFS ON YOU...
...AND SINCE I KNOW THAT MANY OF YOU WILL BE ACTIVE WITH DRUGS FROM TIME TO TIME, TODAY'S CLASS WILL BE ON HOW TO PRACTICE SAFE DRUG USE!
THIS IS A HYPODERMIC SYRINGE. YOU SHOULD USE THIS IF YOU WANT TO INJECT DRUGS DIRECTLY INTO YOUR VEINS. NOTICE HOW IT IS SEALED SO THE USER CAN TELL THE NEEDLE IS CLEAN.
IT'S IMPORTANT YOU USE CLEAN NEEDLES WHEN YOU INJECT DRUGS INTO YOUR BODY. IF YOU DON'T HAVE CLEAN NEEDLES, CHECK WITH THE SCHOOL NURSE AND SHE WILL GIVE YOU SOME. NOW, LET ME SHOW YOU HOW TO FIND THE VEIN...

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ularly if that someone is a candidate or office holder. One of Rohrabacher's colleagues, Rep. Pete Stark, has recently given a stellar performance in this category with regard to HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan.

STILL, IT is instructive to consider the deeper meanings of the phenomenon in this case since they tell so much about how an enterprise — the NEA — begun with the intention of helping to educate and refine the aesthetic sensibilities of the American people has come to be best known and symbolized by a work called "Piss Christ."

As Allan Bloom explains in *The Closing of the American Mind*, what actually comes of the relativists' dogmatic devotion to "openness" is precisely its opposite: a closing of minds, a shutting down of critical faculties, a loss of interest in reality, as opposed to fantasy, and in making essential distinctions between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, between love and hate, and between beauty and ugliness. The NEA controversy most obviously involves this last distinction. The "arts community" is not seriously involved in any campaign to help people appreciate beauty in some new, creative form, but to enforce the relativist dogma against the notion that such a thing as beauty actually exists at all, that men can either know or identify it or distinguish it from ugliness, or capture it in works which then could reasonably be called "art."

"What the 'arts community' is engaged in," Irving Kristol wrote recently, "is a politics of radical nihilism; it has little interest in, and will openly express contempt for, 'art' in any traditional sense of the term. It is no exaggeration to say that the self-destruction of 'art' is a key point in its agenda, accompanied by the 'deconstruction,' not only of bourgeois society, but of Western Civilization itself."

NOW SURELY Mr. Nelson would deny that he is engaged in any such campaign. He would protest that he wants only to save us from the stultifying imposition of arbitrary constraints on creativity; that, perhaps if it takes one dogma — relativism — to save us from all the others, then that is not a bad thing. But no matter how Nelson or the rest of the "arts community" rationalize it, they are in fact abdicating their first responsibility as artists: to capture something beautiful and put it on display or, in a broader sense, to convey some truth. But that kind of art automatically implies that beauty and truth are real and, further, that their absence leaves us with ugliness and falsehood. And *that* is just the sort of repudiation of "openness" that sends these people into the ballistic mode.

Civilization, including art, can't exist without objective values. Values are what civilization embodies; they are what distinguish it from barbarism. The reason so many of the works funded by the NEA are so thoroughly foul is that they set out precisely to deny this undeniable truth. Ugliness, of course, is the result.

Affirmative Incoherence

Our age (as I daresay every age has seemed at the time) is so overflowing with absurdity that it defies mockery.... The melancholia to which clowns, radio comedians, gag writers, editors of Punch, *and all who are in any way concerned in the humor industry are notoriously susceptible is due, I am confident, to being constantly confronted with this tragic dilemma of how to ridicule a world whose reality so often outdoes their wildest and most daring inventions.*

— Malcolm Muggeridge

MR. MUGGERIDGE, meet Judge David Kenyon, who, at almost the exact moment Sarah Flores was finishing first in L. A. County's First District supervisorial primary in June, declared the supervisors' district lines illegal because their configuration guarantees that "an Hispanic is unable to be elected to the board." Or the Honorable Pete Stark, who demonstrated what he apparently considers a deep concern for America's minorities by calling HHS Secretary Louis Sullivan a "disgrace to his race" because Sullivan deviates from correct liberal thinking on abortion and national health insurance. Then there's Actors' Equity, the union that voted to ban British actor Jonathan Pryce from the U.S. production of "Miss Saigon" because allowing a man of Pryce's race to appear in the play would *violate* Actors' Equity's "policy of nondiscrimination."

And if all that is too little to leave a clown in despair, there's always the *Los Angeles Times*' editorial board. In parallel columns, the *Times* condemned Pete Stark's "racist" thinking ("[t]he notion that skin color, religion, ethnic origin or sex obliges a person to hold particular ideas is as hurtful as any other racist idea"), but then applauded Judge Kenyon's efforts to create a "Latino" supervisorial district, on the apparent assumption that one can tell which "particular ideas" matter to Latinos just by knowing their ethnic origin. ("Kenyon's task

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Sacramento Spectator

Fixing Upon the Scarlet "L"

AS IF Republican and conservative fortunes weren't already under enough siege from the liberals, I'm sorry to report that GOP internecine warfare in California continues unabated. In Sacramento, the Assembly Republican Caucus still has hostilities between the "ins" and the "outs," with both sides diverting attention from fighting Democrats to hurling personal insults at one another.

Around the state, people are already choosing up sides for next spring's Republican state convention, where a successor for Party Chairman Frank Visco will be chosen. By tradition, the current vice chairman would automatically be elevated, but there is continuing talk of a challenge.

Again, Republican activists are spending time on this matter and not on electing the GOP statewide ticket. Back in the nation's capital, Republican legislators are feuding with each other over leaked memos, phantom recall campaigns, and whose staff is doing what to whom. *Sacramento Spectator* would like to remind everybody that our enemies are the people with the scarlet "L" on their chests.

MEANWHILE, A REAL sense of panic has set in around the Capitol because of Proposition 140 on the November ballot, the Schabarum term limitation initiative. The proposition, if passed, would limit legislators to a maximum of six years of service in either house of the Legislature. The current batch of incumbents, who view their jobs as lifetime sinecures, are, needless to say, in a dither. Currently, Prop. 140 is 'way, 'way ahead. But look for Speaker Willie Brown and his boys to pull out all the stops to defeat this one. If this passes, a quiet revolution will have been put into motion. And, if it passes, look for the Democrats to come back with their own initiative in 1992 to undo the term limitation. And if they don't succeed in '92, they are committed to try again in '94, and to keep trying until they are successful. The threat of having actual "citizen legislators" once again a dominant force in Sacramento is something Willie and his lieutenants aren't about to sit still for.

THE OTHER initiative to keep an eye on is Prop. 139, the "inmate labor" initiative. This measure, which would require all prison inmates to work while in prison, is a George Deukmejian proposal. He initially tried to get it passed as a bill in the Legislature. However, when organized labor came out against it, their vassals (the Democrats) were whipped into shape by David Roberti in the Senate and Boss Willie in the Assembly. The governor then gathered enough signatures on petitions to qualify the measure for the ballot.

The Democrats may have outsmarted themselves on this one. Initial polls show the public overwhelmingly in support of making prisoners work (is anyone surprised?). But big labor, in dictating terms for their endorsement and funding of candidates, have caused all of the leading Democrats to oppose this measure. Expect to see GOPers from Pete Wilson and Dan Lungren down to Assembly candidates make hay on this issue.

AND LAST, but certainly not least, *Sacramento Spectator*'s sources in Washington, D. of C., say it is becoming more and more likely that Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and 1988 presidential candidate Jack Kemp will resign early next year and move back to California. (Yes, *back* to California. He is a native.) His intention is to run for the Senate against Alan "I never met an S&L I didn't like" Cranston. The story is getting mixed reviews from Golden State conservatives. On one hand, it would be a pity to see a primary election fight between Kemp and Bruce Herschensohn allow a Lefty like Ed Zschau to win again with a minority of the vote. On the other hand, such a battle is not preordained, and the addition of an articulate conservative like Kemp has to be an overall big plus for the movement in California. — *A.P.C.*

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was made harder," the editorialist wrote, presumably with a straight face, "by the fact that a Latina, Sarah Flores, was on the verge of being elected to the board under the old lines....")

A FEW DAYS later, the *Times* criticized Actors' Equity's "monstrous decision" to ban Jonathan Pryce, but then, again on the same page, praised a new affirmative action program launched by the Walt Disney Studios. For near schizophrenic incoherence about racism, the *Times* is tough to beat.

To a certain extent, liberal inconsistencies in this regard trace to politics. Louis Sullivan's high profile non-liberalism threatens to expose the essential falsehood underlying what the *Wall Street Journal* calls "the Liberal Plantation," that is, the conviction, carefully cultivated by white liberals like Stark, that minorities' only hope for survival is an endless series of high-tax, big government programs such as national health insurance and that anyone opposing these programs is some sort of racist. Obviously, when a black member of a president's cabinet says that isn't so, the myth begins to totter. That is the specter that drives white liberals like Pete Stark to frenzied exasperation.

But beyond politics is the defining liberal principle held commonly, though with varying degrees of conviction, by all people on the left that the world is basically wrong and must be changed. This is the one consistently-discernible notion to be found flowing through the otherwise stupifying miasma of contradictions, hypocrisies, convenient lapses, and selective indignations that constitute most of what liberals think of as morality. Racism, hatred, suffering, oppression — all the woes of human history — are caused, in left mythology, by the world's corrupt institutions. Remove the institutions and evil will wither away.

REASONING FROM these assumptions, liberals find that a little benevolent Affirmative Action racism isn't bad after all, and certainly not to be confused with awful right-wing racism, because Affirmative Action is designed to change the world, its institutions and social arrangements. Thus, kind, gentle Kenyonesque or Disneyite racism is good; crude, unpleasant Starkian racism is bad.

Poor Pete Stark just got a little confused. From his perspective, a man like Louis Sullivan is maddeningly incomprehensible. How could a black political leader even appear to be lining up alongside such champions of oppression as George Bush and, even worse, Ronald Reagan? Contemplating this perplexing situation seems to have overloaded a few of Stark's circuits momentarily, bringing on the consequent babbling for which he has now so graciously apologized.

But the real world goes on turning, unconcerned with the posturing and delusions of madcap judges, fuming congressmen, or *Times* editorialists, and the real-world consequences of public policy-making based on those delusions are often tragic. In 1984, William Tucker wrote in *The American Spectator* that "Mao Tse-tung's deliberate efforts to break up the nuclear family on the Chinese rural communes didn't have even a fraction of the effect that contemporary American social policies have had on black Americans."

TUCKER CITED some harrowing statistics: "More than half the black children born in this country today are illegitimate. Almost half of these — 23 percent of all black children — are born to unwed teenage mothers. Every year...more black girls drop out of high school to have a baby than graduate from college. Over 50 percent of all black children are now being raised in 'single parent households' — meaning by unmarried black women. About 75 percent of all poor black children are in these 'families.'"

The '80s saw significant improvement in the circumstances of black Americans, thanks to the Reagan policies liberals routinely castigate as selfish and unfeeling. Between 1982, when the Reagan Administration submitted its first budget, and 1989, the unemployment rate among blacks dropped from 18.9 to 10.9 percent. Freedom alone brings this kind of genuine liberation. Liberals of good will, as James Burnham used to call them, should calm down and take note.

End Notes

A recent Heritage Foundation briefing paper concludes: "George Bush said, 'There's no quicker way to kill prosperity than to raise taxes.' He was right. He said, 'I've been in government a long time, and I've seen what happens when the government raises a dollar in revenues — Congress spends a dollar fifty.' He was right. He said, 'The surest way to kill the recovery is to raise taxes. That will stifle everything from investment and personal savings to consumer spending. It will clamp down on growth. It will invite a recession.' He was right. Thus the battle over taxes is a battle not only for the economy; it is a battle for the integrity and character of the Bush presidency." Heritage is right.

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Hollywood's Strange Compulsion

From Amazing Grace and Chuck *to* Far Out, Man! *and* Salvador, *the Hollywood film machine spends millions producing left-wing message movies almost no one wants to see. An intrepid explorer sifts through the mystery to ask: Why?*

by Michael Medved

Film critic Michael Medved is co-host of the PBS program "Sneak Previews." He is author of What Really Happened to the Class of '65?, The Shadow Presidents, The Golden Turkey Awards, *and four other books. What follows is a transcript of remarks he delivered at the inaugural meeting of the Los Angeles Supper Club, a group organized to provide a platform for discussion of conservative ideas. It is, like* California Political Review, *sponsored by the California Public Policy Foundation.*

The first time I spoke with Mr. Medved he described himself as having been a McGovern Democrat on the left-most fringes of that party during the 1960s and early '70s. He is mentioned in David Horowitz's and Peter Collier's book Destructive Generation *as "a onetime student radical at Yale." In 1987, Medved participated in Horowitz's and Collier's Second Thoughts Conference in Washington, D.C.*

"Almost all those who participated in the conference," Horowitz and Collier wrote, "had experienced some dramatic moment that crystallized the new and disturbing insight they had gotten into the nature of the left as a destructive agency, a moment that would ultimately cause them to reject what Orwell termed its smelly little orthodoxies." For Medved, in addition to the tragedy of Vietnam, there was a more personal reason, according to the book: "a growing sense of his identity as a Jew and the realization that Israel might well have been defeated during the Yom Kippur War if not for the backing of U.S. arms."

Medved is president and co-founder of Pacific Jewish Center in Venice, California, which has won national attention for its successful efforts at attracting unaffiliated young Jews to a traditional Jewish life-style. — *Editor*

Why Does Hollywood Tilt to the Left?

MY ANSWER breaks down into three parts.

First, I want to establish that the motion picture industry *does* tilt to the left — that the movie business not only *has* a leftward tilt, but that it leans so far over in that direction it sometimes seems in danger of falling off the edge of the spectrum.

Second, I want to talk about why the movie business tilts in that direction.

And third, I'll discuss briefly what might be done to create a greater sense of political balance in the offerings and activities of the entertainment industry.

On establishing the leftward tilt of the Hollywood establishment, one of the things that most astonishes me is the absolute refusal of those people who are most involved in the organized left in the movie business to acknowledge their own influence and power. It is quite common for people who are deeply committed in their politics and who work diligently in support of the Show Coalition, or People for the American Way, or the Hollywood Women's Political Action Committee,*

* The Show Coalition is a New York-based, left-wing political organization headed by actor Ron Silver that raises money to contribute to political campaigns and to argue for left-liberal positions at public forums. People for the American Way is Norman Lear's left-wing political action committee. It opposes judicial nominees who are not liberal activists. The Hollywood Women's Political Action Committee, prominently supported by Barbra Streisand, raises funds for political races and has contributed millions of dollars to Democrat congressional candidates. It is a major supporter of California's Sen. Alan Cranston.

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or any of the other myriad of militantly left-wing organizations that flourish within the industry, to say that Hollywood's product is actually *right* wing, or reactionary in its orientation.

THEIR EVIDENCE is always the same few movies. They say this is the business that made *Top Gun*, the *Rambo* films, the *Dirty Harry* sequels and clones, and the *Death Wish* films glorifying vigilante violence, usually against ethnic minorities. It's a business, they add, with dour countenance, that *even* made *Red Dawn*, a vision of American high school students fighting against a Soviet occupation of this country. And this is the business, most recently, that made *The Hunt for Red October*, which dramatizes the defection of a Lithuanian captain in the Soviet Navy who is disillusioned with the excesses of his government. How can the industry that made such films ever be accused of left-wing bias?

The fact is, however, that all of these movies I've named have one thing in common: they all made money, buckets of it. They were all among the biggest successes of the years in which they were released. So, no one should be surprised, after *Top Gun*'s spectacular success, that suddenly there are all sorts of pictures that attempt to recapture the magic formula that worked so well for that film. It's the nature of Hollywood to attempt instantly to duplicate a movie that does business. There is no reason to assume any political bias when *successful* films inspire sequels and imitators. But there *is* good reason to assume political bias when box office failures are duplicated time and again, regardless of the financial consequences to the producers.

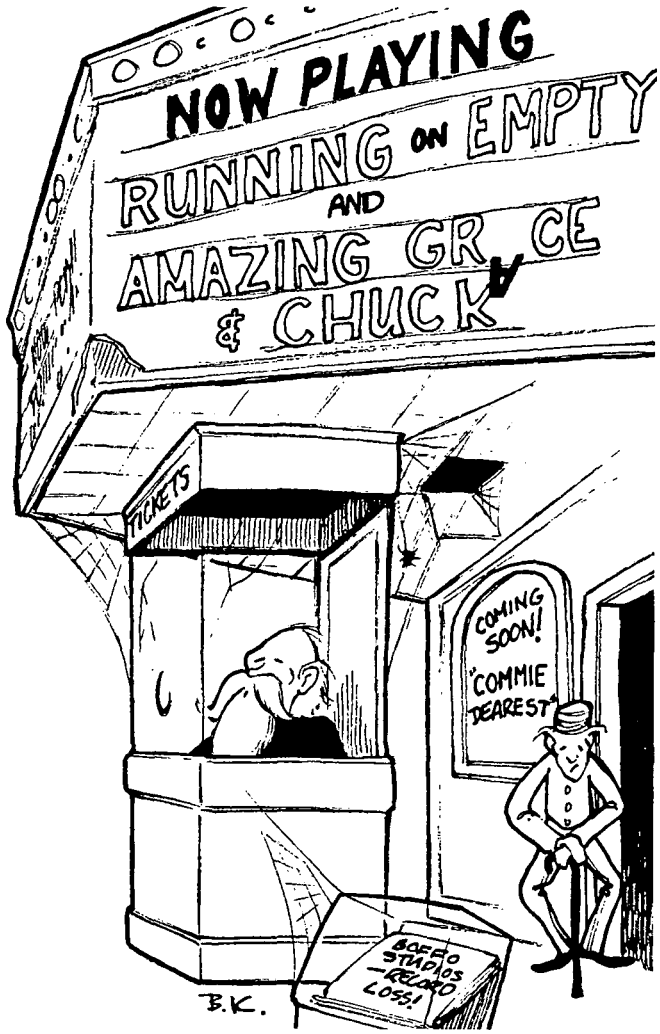
EXAMPLES OF such films with a liberal point of view are plentiful.

The most obvious instance involves Hollywood's commitment to making cinematic statements opposing apartheid in South Africa. Three recent major studio productions in this category — big pictures, big stars, big budgets — were *Cry Freedom*, *A World Apart*, and, most recently, *A Dry White Season*, for which Marlon Brando got a shockingly undeserved Oscar nomination last year. All of these movies *lost money*. *Cry Freedom*, in particular, flopped in a big way.

So why, then, is Hollywood currently developing a half dozen new, competing anti-apartheid projects?

It can't possibly be explained as a business decision.

For another example, consider all those wonderful movies about American imperialism in Central America: *Salvador* with James Woods, *Under Fire* with Gene Hackman, or *Romero* with Raul Julia. There have also been films such as *Latino*, which nobody saw, a Haskell Wexler film about an American Special Forces agent, a Mexican-American, who's sent down to help the Contras rape and murder and pillage, but then does a turn-around, joins the Sandinistas, and helps them bring peace and justice to Central America. Last year they even released — or perhaps I should say unleashed — *Rude Awakening*. Did anyone see that? It



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takes place in a fictional socialist paradise called "Managuador." I wonder what country that's supposed to be? Eric Roberts and Cheech Marin play two unreconstructed hippies who defeat an evil CIA plot to overthrow the government of Managuador.

NOBODY SAW these movies — they all bombed abysmally but for some reason no one in a position of authority seemed to care that this formula was failing.

Another illogical Hollywood habit has been the itch to make films glorifying old lefties. The most famous example, of course, is *Reds*. Imagine you're the head of Paramount Pictures and Warren Beatty comes to you and says, "Hey guys, I'd like about $45 million to make an epic about a love affair involving America's most famous communist agitator. What do you say?"

Who succeeds in Hollywood? Who puts their entire lives on the line to try to make it in this business? Not those who are fundamentally committed to home and hearth.

They should have at least suggested that he retitle it *Commie Dearest*. *Reds*, to this day, remains one of the most costly financial disasters in the history of Paramount Pictures, even though Beatty won an Oscar as best director for the film. *Reds* is the best-known example of the romanticization of the American left, but there are so many others.

How many people saw *Daniel*, an uplifting domestic drama about that intimate and loving family, the Rosenbergs? It featured an all-star cast, and it proved to be a huge flop. That was followed by *Garbo Talks*, with Anne Bancroft and Ron Silver, where she plays, again, an old-line, unrepentant leftist heroine who is, in the film, dying of cancer. And similarly, Burt Lancaster starred as an uncompromising, unreconstructed, former black-listed writer in a sickening movie called *Rocket Gibraltar* that describes his efforts to persuade his grandchildren to kidnap his body after he dies and to burn it on the beach.

A FILM CALLED *House on Carol Street* played for the blink of an eye. It featured Kelly McGillis, a major star, and again, described the McCarthy era as a battle between pure-hearted left-wing idealists and horrible finks for Senate committees. A film called *Insignificance* featured Tony Curtis playing Joe McCarthy. Is anyone surprised that this one bombed?

Those who make these films are in business. You'd think they would get the message: the American public is not interested in old leftists, even when they're played by Warren Beatty.

Finally, we have all the retro-'60s movies, reviving and romanticizing the '60s radicals. *Running on Empty*, again a film with Oscar nominations, again a major box office dud, is about two former bombers from the '60s, though *these* bombers actually *warned* people to be out of the building they hit, and it was only *by accident* that someone was injured. Another film called *Far Out, Man!*, starring Tommy Chong, is about a former radical who comes back and brings the true faith to all of us benighted types in the late 1980s. *Flashback*, another Paramount Picture, stars Dennis Hopper and Kiefer Sutherland. Hopper plays an Abbie Hoffman-like character who comes back from the underground, is arrested by the F.B.I., but finally persuades the dedicated G-man that the old radicals really had the right idea. One of the last lines of the movie is, "Working together, we're going to see that the '90s make the '60s look like the '50s by comparison." If you can figure that out! The film did no business.

IT IS no indication of political bias when Hollywood plays to the crowd, making usually simple-minded action films with broad crowd appeal that make money. Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer, who made *Top Gun*, are hardly right-wingers. They support all the industry's more popular left-wing causes. But they knew they could make money with a rah-rah, pro-Navy film like *Top Gun*, so they made the picture. That doesn't indicate *any* kind of right-wing sentiment — just a predisposition in Hollywood to make money.

But the Hollywood establishment's absolute, unshakeable *left*-wing bias *is* evidenced when they keep churning out movies that they know hold no prospect of making money.

Did anyone see *Amazing Grace and Chuck*, which several of my colleagues hailed as one of the best films of the year in 1988? It's a Gregory Peck film about a Little League pitcher who refuses to pitch unless the president of the United States dismantles all of America's nuclear weapons — and *succeeds* in getting the president to do it. It's great. Such pictures don't make a dime but they keep getting made because the industry is full of true believers in left-wing causes.

That brings me to my second point: why is this so?

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Answering that question fully would require a difficult and lengthy analysis beyond the scope of this discussion. But I would like at least to give a few hints and suggestions about the answer.

FIRST OF all, beginning long before the existence of movies, theatrical people have traditionally thought of themselves as outlaws living on the margins of society. They tend to look a little bit askance at the rest of us inside our living rooms with our families and our mortgages, seeing themselves as free-spirits and Bohemians. Somehow, Bohemianism is not the first word that comes to mind when you are thinking of an adjective to describe a conservative.

Another reason the entertainment business has always shown a certain leftward tilt in lifestyle and orientation can be found in the single-minded determination to succeed usually necessary to advance in that business. Who succeeds in Hollywood? Who puts their entire lives on the line to try to make it in this business? Not those who are fundamentally committed to home and hearth. There is an old saying that a successful movie producer would even sacrifice his firstborn son to have a major hit. That's not a joke and it's not hyperbole; I think it's often a simple statement of fact.

And I think that speaks to the fundamental values of those who pursue success in this business. They tend to count success above personal relationships, above family, above any peace or sanctity, and above home life. I spent three years working primarily as a screenwriter. I was working for major studios and one of the reasons I left that line of work, aside from the frustrations of the work itself, was that it was so utterly incompatible with any of the values I wanted in my personal life. The same values and commitments that dragged me out of the screenwriting business are the values and commitments that helped make me a conservative. Staking your entire life on these long-shot attempts at making it in the movie business is fundamentally incompatible with the commitment to family and community that, after all, has been a central element in the conservative world view for many years.

ANOTHER FACTOR encouraging left-leaning politics among Hollywood's most successful people is that most of them know that their success is not explicable in any rational terms at all. Those in Hollywood who make a fortune because of the glint of their smile or the curve of their leg feel at a gut level that they don't deserve it. They know that it is largely due to random factors that many other actors and actresses are waiting tables while they are raking in money, and that there is no simple explanation in terms of their greater dedication or ability. Doesn't it seem odd that these people who are earning millions of dollars a year are nonetheless in favor of raising the tax rates on the wealthy? They want to redistribute the wealth and they don't mean just other people's wealth, but their own as well. They want this redistribution, I think, because they see so clearly that rewards in Hollywood are distributed according to no rational pattern. And this, after all, is their only available model for capitalism. They assume that the differences in the economy at large between people who make it and people who don't are as accidental and irrational as the differences between actors who make it and actors who don't. Or screenwriters who make it and screenwriters who don't, or directors who make it and directors who don't. The guilt they feel for their own success pushes a lot of them in a left-wing direction.

The dirtiest charge that can come up — and does, at every moment — in a Hollywood discussion is: "that's McCarthyism, that's a new blacklist."

And finally, along with the insecurity and guilt, there is a desperate desire, particularly on the part of younger actors and actresses, to be taken seriously. This is particularly evident with the teen stars, the so-called "brat pack." The entire brat pack has taken its political education sitting at the knees of Tom Hayden at his Santa Barbara ranch. He is the source of

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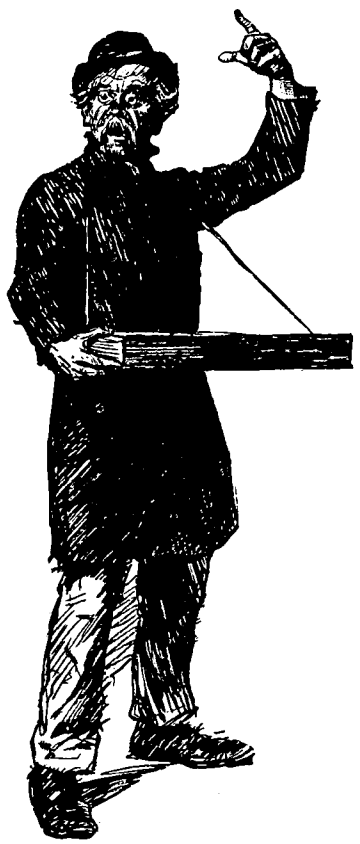
their political knowledge. These are not great intellects. They have not concentrated on political philosophy in Ivy League schools. They are pretty people making a very good living *because* their faces are arresting and they can look at a camera without blinking.

AND THEY find that political commitment in a general sense — which, in Hollywood, always means a leftward sense — is a way to be taken seriously by their peers. Do you know what major legal scholar officially represented all the Hollywood left-wing organizations in demonstrating against the confirmation of Judge Robert Bork? *Rob Lowe*, one of the great judicial minds of our time. Of course, this was before his debut with home video.

Rob Lowe is a perfect example. Intellectually, he's a joke, of course. He's just a pretty guy who can act. But he wants to be something more and by attacking Judge Bork he gets to feel that he *is* something more. It was hilarious: this legal giant, Mr. Lowe, correcting Judge Bork for "not understanding our Constitution"!! What is actually stated in the First Amendment doesn't matter to Rob Lowe; I'm not even sure he bothered to look it up. What *does* matter to him is his burning desire to be taken seriously, and the entire established culture in Hollywood knows that the best way to be taken seriously is through left-wing activism.

A fascinating piece appeared in this month's *Glamour* magazine, one of those major journals of intellectual opinion. In this article, under the heading "The New Sexy Men, the Politicos," we read that "[t]he type of actor who intrigues us now is a higher form of animal, a man of ideas and ideals, the politico. He seduces with his brain, his limitless energy, his zealous optimism. He's passionate, charismatic. He knows about everything and has the bookshelves to prove it. He is Robert Redford, Warren Beatty, Richard Dreyfuss, Paul Newman, and the man of the moment, Ron Silver. Politicos who haven't been at it as long are Ted Danson and River Phoenix." *River Phoenix* is the man who "knows about everything and has the bookshelves to prove it"? Wouldn't you like to know what's on those shelves? I don't think you'll find Hayek and Buckley.



But all this discussion of directors, writers, and stars still leaves an obvious question about the corporations that provide the money for all this. Why didn't they say no to Warren Beatty when he proposed *Reds* for all that money? Why didn't they say no to *Flashback*? These multi-national companies that control so much of the movie business are not particularly noted for their left-wing bias. Generally, they are apolitical. But everyone in Hollywood has been intimidated by the residue of McCarthyism. The dirtiest charge that can come up — and does, at every moment — in a Hollywood discussion is: "that's McCarthyism, that's a new blacklist." The charge recalls a terrible wound in the psyche of the entertainment industry. Many people still powerful in the business were directly harmed by the hysteria that prevailed during the McCarthy era and they remember it — every detail of it — and live it again and again. I was reviewing director Costa-Gavras's movie *Betrayed* and I had the temerity to observe on national television that Costa-Gavras — when he portrayed America on the verge of fascist take-over — had a skewed perspective, that the director was, after all, a member of the Communist Party. In fact, he has frequently discussed this affiliation in public and has actively supported communist candidates in France. I was not suggesting that he was *once* a member. He is *currently* an active member of the French Communist Party. But when I identified Costa-Gavras in terms he proudly uses to identify himself, I was harshly criticized by outraged viewers and charged with McCarthyism. Anything pointing out any kind of left-wing bias is always called McCarthyism. The left, of course, believes in freedom of speech, but only as long as this freedom is never used to criticize *them*.

THIS CHARGE of McCarthyism, heard constantly, has genuinely intimidated the executives who might otherwise shy away from risky political material. In other words, if you turn down my $45 million movie about America's most famous com-

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munist agitator and his love affair, then you are a McCarthyite. You are giving in to right-wing pressure. McCarthy-era memories and sensitivities are still powerful enough in Hollywood to stop even corporate heads who should know better from objecting in any way to the left-wing content of the movies they finance, and on which they lose money time and again.

FINALLY, MY third point. What can we do to redress the balance in Hollywood?

First, we should encourage conservatives within the entertainment community or even moderates within that community — *anyone* who is *not* a committed leftist — to come out of their closets and declare themselves. People in this business are, with good reason, afraid that their careers will be harmed if word gets out that they are registered Republicans. I constantly meet people who say, "I've never met a registered Republican before." I was at a premiere for a movie shortly after the 1988 election and the producer of the film was holding forth. "I still don't understand how that s.o.b. won," he said. "I don't know a single person who voted for Bush." Part of the reason is that those in the Hollywood community who *did* vote for Bush, who are Republicans, or who aren't on the left are afraid to say so. The exception is the male, macho action star — if you are Arnold Schwarzenegger or Clint Eastwood or Sylvester Stallone or Chuck Norris or Tom Selleck, then it's okay to be conservative. That's the one area in which publicly-identified conservatives seem to thrive in Hollywood. If more people can be encouraged to get together in various causes, to show that there *are* other voices and other views even within the Hollywood community, that would help to change things.

Secondly, and even more importantly, it is time to redefine some terms. Back during my law school years as one of the leaders of the Vietnam moratorium, one of my jobs was to go out to high schools — we were actually allowed to do this in 1969 — to speak at student assemblies. At the beginning of my speech, I would say "I'm not here as any kind of political speaker because I am not talking about politics. I'm not talking about Young Republicans. I'm not talking about Young Democrats. I'm not talking about anything political. I'm talking about common decency. I'm talking about reaching out and stopping the killing."

Ever since those heady days of the anti-war movement, the left has been pushing a similar line and has proven itself extraordinarily adept at presenting its entire agenda in *non*-political terms.

The left never calls itself "the left." They call themselves *activists*. They call themselves idealists. They never even call themselves liberals. None of the obituaries of the late Mitch Snyder, for example, even mentioned that he was left wing or liberal in his political orientation. He was an "activist for the homeless," an "agitator for social justice," he was "working to alleviate the plight of the forgotten and the oppressed." Anyone who would dare to oppose this sort of compassion must seem, by definition, less humanitarian and noble than Snyder was.

Part of the enduring Hollywood mind-set is the conception that political debate is not between liberals and conservatives, but rather between compassion and complacency, between idealism and selfishness. When choices are framed in such terms, no wonder so many good-hearted people choose the left.

If more people can be encouraged to get together in various causes, to show that there are *other voices and other views even within the Hollywood community, that would help to change things.*

We can no longer accept such slogans as the terms of debate. It's extraordinarily important that conservatives begin to make our own case, not only in terms of criticizing the left, but in terms of raising our own idealistic banners. Let's not only talk about what's wrong with them, but about what's right with us, and what we need to do. Let's talk about supporting the forces of democracy in Beijing or Havana, about giving the kind of reception in the United States to Jonas Savimbi or to Chief Buthelezi that was recently accorded Nelson Mandela. Why not talk about the struggle to free African Americans from the tentacles of an oppressive welfare bureaucracy and to free them also from the patronizing and paternalistic notion of enforced quotas.

WE SHOULD talk in terms of liberation, in terms of freedom, in terms of democracy, in terms of idealism. We should articulate our own agenda in selfless terms, because once we concede the mantle of selflessness to the other side, we've lost, particularly with all these

(Please turn to page 29)

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Unmasking the Left in Irvine

The power of the press: how an East Coast investigative journalist helped rid Orange County of its very own Evil Emperor.

by
David Brock

IF, AS the cliche goes, politics is made up of small victories, the surprise defeat of Irvine's Mayor Larry Agran this past June ought to send off a ripple of hope to local Republican activists in California. Democrat Agran had been a fixture in Irvine politics since he first won a seat on the heavily Republican city's council in 1978. He took his turn at the revolving mayorship in 1986, and in 1988, in the first direct election for the part-time office, won by a 2-1 margin while his supporters were taking control of the City Council. As his star rose in Irvine, Agran garnered a national reputation in such socially-advanced precincts as the editorial page of the *New York Times* as neoliberalism's Boy Wonder, thriving in the heart of Reaganite Orange County on a platform of expanding public services and slowing growth. At the outset of this year's re-election race, Agran and his slate were considered virtual shoo-ins to win June 5.

During the 1980s, Agran also was closely associated with the movement by hundreds of U.S. city governments to enact municipal foreign policy initiatives, from nuclear-free zones to disinvestment measures. Agran's Irvine-based Center for Innovative Diplomacy, a non-profit think tank urging cities to take on global issues, circulated "model" laws to about 1,000 like-minded local officials nationwide. Meanwhile the mayor used Irvine as a publicly-funded laboratory for pet projects like international sister-cities. "Think globally, act locally" went the slogan.

BUT AS his political power and *élan* grew, so did the danger that Agranism would collapse under the weight of its own contradictions and conceits. Though perhaps a little overwrought, comparisons with the wretched regimes of Eastern Europe had a certain resonance nonetheless. Call it the Tale of Two Agrans: '60s-style social engineering wrapped in a fog of rhetoric about the global economy and urban planning. Tammany Hall-style political bossism masquerading as "good government." The considerable problem his critics faced was how to trip up this smooth artist of the sleight of hand.

AS GLEN GREENER, the Orange County political consultant who ran the winning campaign of new Mayor Sally Ann Sheridan, tells it, the first task was to convince people that Agran was beatable. A prototypical New Class liberal, the mayor engendered an air of invincibility with his targeted mailers, hefty warchests, and sophisticated, if not charming, public persona. Then there was Agran's fanatical devotion to hardball politics, a pursuit his foes found, at best, somewhat distasteful to join.

More than a year ago, Greener deconstructed the Irvine vote and concluded that the conventional wisdom, which had leftish Agran elected by conservative Republicans, was wrong. In fact, Agran had skillfully employed the now-classic Democrat strategy of cobbling together a slim majority by appealing to special interests. In Irvine, these included the cosmopolitan crowd at the University of California, and the "not-in-my-backyard" residents of certain neighborhoods who opposed certain development projects.

The key point in Greener's analysis was that this quintessentially middle-class, middle-of-the-road community contained little in the way of a solid political base for Agran's agenda. The key was inciting the Silent (presumably anti-Agran) Majority. And the initial key-puncher was the mayor himself.

During his two-year stint at the helm, Agran gov-

David Brock is the Heritage Foundation's John M. Olin Fellow. His article, "The Evil Emperor of Irvine, California," appeared in the May 1990 issue of The American Spectator.

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erned with a vengeance. His more spectacular flubs included a proposal to remodel half of an Irvine dog kennel into a 60-bed homeless shelter at a time when Irvine had five homeless families; passage by the Agran-controlled City Council of a human rights ordinance that extended special anti-discrimination protection to those of exotic "sexual preference"; a vaguely-worded law restricting the use of chlorofluorocarbon chemicals contained in such items as plastic foam packaging, brake cleaner, and fingernail polish remover to be administered by a city-funded Environmental KGB (in practice, the law is proving so unenforceable that the city is issuing all manner of exemptions); and a plan to build an "urban village" of 28,000 residential units in a downtown business park, increasing residential density by 30 percent, and (the mayor hoped) creating a demand for mass transit.

WITH EACH initiative came a minor backlash. The homosexual protection law was even repealed by the citizens in a special initiative last year. Earlier, the anti-Agran movement got a jump start when Irvine resident Howard Klein sued the city to stop an anti-democratic maneuver by the Agran-controlled Council. Agran's June 1988 election as mayor had opened up his seat on the Council and a city law mandated a special election to fill the vacancy if 10 percent of the electorate so petitioned. But when they did so petition, Agran refused to comply with the law. Instead, the Agran majority swore in an Agran crony who had been a runner-up in the 1988 Council race. The attention generated by the Klein case was the first sign of trouble ahead for Agran.

Still, going into the campaign this spring, Agran was the odds-on favorite. In the end, he would outspend his opponent more than two to one, drawing on the finances of febrile friends in Hollywood and Manhattan. Agran also had going for him what one wag calls the "Larrykrishnas," devotees who ran the much-inflated City Hall bureaucracy. Agran had an elaborate network of dummy "citizens committees" that skirted Irvine's campaign contributions laws by making in-kind donations to his campaigns in the form of widely-circulated pro-Agran newsletters. Agran *even* had the support of most of the developers, who, though they bore the brunt of the mayor's demagogic attacks, nonetheless felt safer hedging their bets.

The considerable problem his critics faced was how to trip up this smooth artist of the sleight of hand.

Against all of this, City Councilwoman and local realtor Sally Ann Sheridan relied upon common sense and the people of Irvine. Barry Hammond, who ran on the successful Sheridan slate for City Council, dubs the winning strategy "xeroxes and Reeboks."

By far the most popular item coursing through the Sheridan campaign's photocopying machines was a lengthy exposé of Agran I penned for last May's issue of the *The American Spectator*, a monthly political review published in Washington, D.C. Titled "The Evil Emperor of Irvine, California," the article was subsequently republished in the Commentary section of the *Orange County Register*, whose opinion pages — in contrast to the news columns — were staunchly, and penetratingly, anti-Agran. According to Greener, about 20,000 xeroxed copies of the Evil Emperor piece made their way to Irvine doorsteps. Later, as the campaign drew to a close, the Lincoln Club of nearby Fullerton spent about $30,000 distributing three anti-Agran mailers based largely on the charges aired in the *Spectator*. After the election, Agran told the *Register* that the article was the "single most damaging event" of the campaign and blamed "outside instigators" for his demise.

THE *SPECTATOR* article diverged in important ways from the standard-issue right-wing attacks that had been launched against Agran in past campaigns. Those revolved around his cozy connections to Tom Hayden, his paens to Sandinism, and his espousal of unilateral

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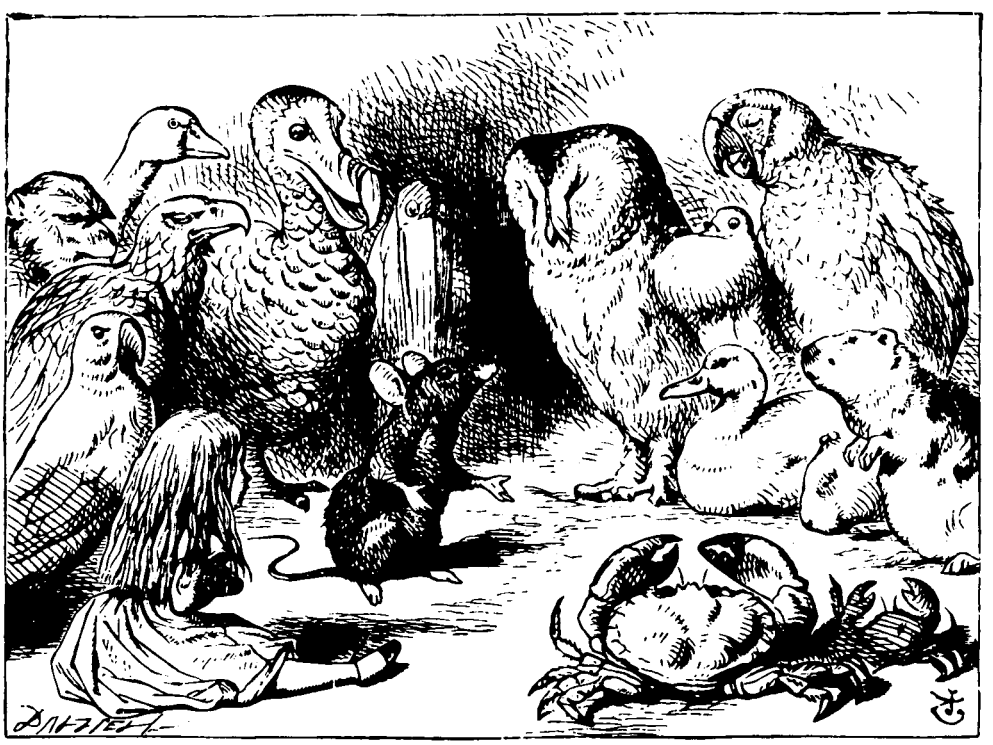
disarmament. Rather than crediting Agran with the earnestness of an ideologue, the piece painted a portrait of a deeply cynical power-monger manipulating and dividing the Irvine electorate for his own ends.

EXAMPLES WERE not exactly hard to come by. Agran posed as a slow-growth environmentalist, though he actually favored high-density development and extorted developer funds to push his projects and fund his campaigns. He purged dozens of veteran city staff professionals who disagreed with him from the Irvine payroll and ordered those who remained to play politics with environmental impact reports. He had foreign policy initiatives rubber-stamped by the City Council, then turned around and marketed the same initiatives to other cities at Irvine's expense. He spoke the language of democracy, yet spent $140,000 in city money defending his strong-arm tactics against Howard Klein in court. Then after Klein lost his suit, Agran threatened to sue Klein to recover Irvine's court costs. In the early '80s he joined the far-left Democratic Socialists of America political party, then tried to claim that he didn't know he had done so. (Agran never responded to the substance of any of these charges.)

"The issue became 'What does Larry Agran really stand for?'" says Orange County political analyst Harvey Englander. "The article put Agran in a defensive posture and he never recovered," said Greener. "He adopted a 'They're out to get me' mentality. By contrast, we were always on the offensive."

Sheridan hit Agran hard on the "global versus local" issue, asserting that the $100,000 Agran spent on a city Office of International Affairs to promote and maintain a sister city relationship with Tsubuka, Japan, did nothing to fill the city's widening potholes. She committed herself to bringing back fiscal sanity and professionalism to city government. "We heard a lot of people taking up the pothole line," said Brian Manning, editor of the *Irvine World News*, a local newspaper owned by the Irvine Company, a major real estate concern. "While Agran neglected things like this, he kept pushing his global agenda, and I think there was a point where people couldn't stomach it any more."

Agran ran a campaign based not on issues, but on personal attacks. He unearthed an inconsistency in Sheridan's résumé — she had done postgraduate work in nursing at Harvard but claimed an advanced degree she never received — and ordered the city to investigate a conflict-of-interest charge he made against her. In 15 years as Irvine realtors, Sheridan and her husband apparently had sold a few houses to city employees, committing the high crime of making a living selling private property.



THE RÉSUMÉ revelation created a minor sensation in the well-credentialed enclave. The second charge simply never caught fire. In fact, at a City Council meeting in May where the conflict-of-interest question was to be discussed in closed session, Sheridan supporters packed the house and demanded an end to Agran's chicanery. "We used '60s-style tactics against Agran," Greener said. "We had a noisy demonstration outside the hall with posters saying 'No More Secrecy' and 'Stop the Back-Door Dealings.' Inside, it was emotionally-charged. And Agran, who is good at making meticulous plans, didn't know how to respond." (The investigator — Willie Brown's personal attorney —

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whom Agran hired to look into the conflict-of-interest allegations, ended up concluding that they had no merit.)

FOLLOWING THE meeting, the momentum shifted decisively in Sheridan's favor. The campaign was flush with new volunteers, crucial to the kind of people-to-people campaign Sheridan wanted to wage. "We covered most of the town. The candidates and volunteers went door-to-door and made personal calls to targeted voters," Greener said.

Agran ran his typical above-the-fray public relations effort, stuffing mailboxes with glossy flyers tailored to the special-interest concerns of particular neighborhoods and groups. But even this seemed to work against him, since it credited the idea that he was trying to buy the race. "Larry perfected this sort of sophisticated, computerized operation," Manning said, "but I think there was a perception this time around that it was too sophisticated."

Still, even though Sheridan had out-organized and out-campaigned Agran, on election day the candidates were in a virtual dead heat. In part, this was due to lopsided press coverage of the race. "Agran has always gotten good press, and that continued in this campaign. The press typically refers to him as 'Irvine's Innovative Mayor,'" says Harvey Englander. Englander and other analysts give the *Los Angeles Times* better marks for balanced coverage than the news department of the *Orange County Register*; the *Register* is, by far, the dominant force in the county.

The *Los Angeles Times* broke the only anti-Agran story of the campaign when it reported details of an arrangement whereby an Irvine developer was renting two motel rooms to the Agran campaign for $6.50 each per day. The best publicly offered rate was $50 a day for a long-term stay. The *Times* also twice took note of the *Spectator* article, once in column one on the front-page of the Orange County edition.

THE *REGISTER'S* news department, however, was "less than aggressive with respect to Agran" while hot on the trail of any information potentially damaging to the Sheridan effort, said Howard Klein. For example, the *Register* gave the Sheridan résumé flap and conflict of interest allegations front-page treatment but never followed up with a story of its own about the Agran motel discount after the *Times* broke it. The news department's only reference to the *Spectator* article came the day after election day. That day, the *Register* ran a front-page photo of Sheridan getting a victory kiss from a major local developer lending credence to the Agran charge that she was in the pocket of the developers. The *Times*, by contrast, had a photo of a dejected Agran cleaning out his City Hall office. Neither paper covered a secret April 27 campaign fund raising event thrown for Agran to which only a select group of Irvine's major developers were invited, even though the meeting elicited a public protest after word of it leaked out.

Agran even had the support of most developers, who, though they bore the brunt of the mayor's demagogic attacks, nonetheless felt safer hedging their bets.

The turnout was on par with past mayoral elections — about 25,000 votes cast, with Sheridan inching out Agran by less than 800 votes. In a city where 60 percent of the voters are registered with the GOP, the early assumption was that Agran was beaten by the votes of hard-core Republicans. But Greener's post-election analysis shows that "conservative Republicans just don't vote [in Irvine's local elections]. What did it was that we reached regular Democrats and independents. We won the undecideds and turned some of his supporters around." Indeed, for all Agran's touting of the "grass roots," Englander said, "She did a much better job of turning out her people than he did."

AGRAN, WHO declined to comment for this article, offered a self-pitying post-mortem to a reporter from the *Register* the day after the election: "In a sense, we were victimized by our own programs. I don't believe that you get involved in political life to remain largely invisible and play it safe. Sometimes success leads to vulnerability." A few days after the election, while still in office, Agran showed he hadn't quite learned the right lesson. Sheridan's victory opened up a seat on the Council, and Agran tried again to circumvent the special election law that applies in such cases as he had when his own seat became open in 1988. This time, in an eleventh hour power play, he tried to make it easier for one of his acolytes, Mary Ann Gaido — the third runner-up in the Council race — to take the vacant

(Please turn to page 31)

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Forum

New Era at the Sacramento Union

Joseph Farah is the new editor of The Sacramento Union, *a syndicated columnist, and editor of* Between the Lines, *a bi-weekly newsletter covering the politics of the news media and entertainment industry. A veteran writer, reporter, and editor, Farah served as executive editor of the Leader Newspapers in Southern California and as executive news editor of the Los Angeles* Herald Examiner *for more than six years.*

California Political Review: The Sacramento Union *has one of the longest, most colorful histories of any newspaper in California, correct?*

Farah: The *Union* is the oldest continuously-published newspaper in the West. It was founded in 1851. We have a huge bust of Mark Twain in the lobby of our building because Twain, in his autobiography, credited *The Sacramento Union* with bringing him national attention. We have an excerpt from Twain's autobiography reproduced beneath the bust that reads:

Early in 1866 George Barnes invited me to resign my reportership on his paper, the San Francisco Morning Call, *and for some months thereafter I was without money or work; then I had a pleasant turn of fortune. The proprietors of* The Sacramento Union, *a great and influential daily journal, sent me to the Sandwich Islands to write four letters a month at $20 apiece. I was there four or five months, and returned to find myself about the best known man on the Pacific coast.*

And regarding the *Union* itself, as the oldest continuing daily newspaper west of the Mississippi, it is certainly something of an institution.

***CPR**: How has the paper fared more recently?*

Farah: Unfortunately, for the past 10 years or so, the *Union*'s circulation has slowly declined. Experiments to reverse that have been tried — going to a tabloid format for a while, and then, about six months ago, converting back to standard newspaper size. At one time, the *Union*'s circulation was more than 100,000. Now, it is read by slightly fewer than 70,000 people.

***CPR**: How do these numbers compare with circulation figures for* The Sacramento Bee*?*

Farah: The *Bee* has long been a big paper here. Their circulation is more than 200,000, so the *Union* has never been anywhere near the size of the *Bee*. Our objective now is to provide a viable alternative to the *Bee*.

***CPR**: Is the* Union *healthy enough financially to do that?*

Farah: The paper is not far from being profitable. The owners want it to be in the black. I don't think they expect to make a lot of money with the newspaper but they don't want to lose money either.

The *Union* is not in the kind of financial trouble that plagues some newspapers around the country. I read that the *Washington Times* loses $35 million a year. That's serious money. The *Herald Examiner*, where I worked for several years, lost at least $1 million a month every year for 15 years. *That* is serious money.

Our losses are nowhere near that level. So we think that with an improved product, an improved service, and a distinct alternative identity, the *Union* will be financially successful.

***CPR**: How will you improve your product?*

Farah: We've made many changes. A new publisher was named: Jim Smith, who was president of the old *Washington Star*. Jim has a long, illustrious newspaper career. Also, new advertising and circulation directors are coming on board.

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***CPR**: Everything began with a new owner, right?*

Farah: Danny Benvenuti became the *Union*'s principal owner about one year ago. He bought the paper from the Scaife family, though, actually, the Scaifes are still involved with *The Sacramento Union.* They own a small percentage of the company. Mr. Benvenuti is dedicated to turning this paper around. I think he may be just what the doctor ordered for the *Union.* One of the things I think is wrong with the newspaper business is that most dailies are now owned by large newspaper conglomerates that pay less attention to a community's local needs than the old independent publishers might have done. I think that, generally, local ownership is healthy and I think it's going to be one of the keys to the *Union*'s success.

The important way the news is skewed is in the choices made about which stories will be pursued and which let go, about which news to emphasize, and which to ignore.

***CPR**: Your newsletter,* Between the Lines, *often harshly criticizes bias in the media. How will you handle the issue of bias at the* Union*?*

Farah: First of all, newspapers divide into news and commentary sections. Everyone agrees that commentators should be as biased as they want to be...

***CPR**: How do you define bias?*

Farah: By that I mean that they hold strong points of view and make no bones about holding them. In contrast, historically, newspaper people have tried to maintain that the news columns are free of bias, that news stories are fair and accurate and that news judgments are not based on political ideologies but on the news value of given stories.

In this regard, American journalism by and large has been absolutely fraudulent. It has attempted to perpetuate a hoax on the American people, though I think most people are smart enough to see through it. American journalism is tainted by bias because American journalists are overwhelmingly of one mindset, a mindset that is extremely liberal and secular.

***CPR**: Is liberalism the problem? Or is it "herd journalism" — a lockstep uniformity of opinion among journalists? If, for instance, they were all conservative, would you say the same thing?*

Farah: Yes. The most important way that news becomes biased is not in the way stories are written, although that's certainly one way bias shows itself. But the more important way the news is skewed is in the choices made about which stories will be pursued and which let go, about which parts of the news to emphasize, and which to ignore.

For example, we just finished a long and arduous battle over the state budget in Sacramento. In most of the state's newspapers — in their editorials and in their news columns — the focus was on the "process." The usual story talked about the give and take between the two sides that would supposedly be necessary before a resolution could be reached.

I thought the substance of the debate would be more interesting. Like most conservatives, I wanted to know whether or not California really *does* need a tax increase. I wanted to know what cuts could be made in the budget. I looked around my newsroom for a reporter capable of asking the right questions and willing to search through the budget looking for waste. Frankly, having just arrived at the *Union* and having inherited a newsroom which is quite like other newsrooms in the United States — that is, one dominated by young, liberal journalists — I did not find exactly what I was looking for.

***CPR**: Was the story done?*

Farah: It was, though not to my satisfaction necessarily. But we attempted to do the story. And a lot of conservatives in this town were excited to see how the budget could be balanced by cutting waste. If we had been dealing with the Defense Department budget, I would have had people in the newsroom lining up to volunteer to go out and write about waste and ways to cut it. But when the issue is social spending in the state budget, nobody wants to take it on.

***CPR**: Why do you think so little variety exists in the reporter corps? Do journalistic careers appeal to liberals more than to conservatives?*

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Farah: There must be something to the notion that liberals more than conservatives are attracted to the communications world because the news media has always shown a liberal taint, even before the 1960s when, I think, this bias in the media became most acute. And just considering my personal experience, I know that young people I've met who are more conservative are attracted to other professions: the business world, computers, the military — they are attracted to a variety of ways of life. But I know very few who want to become journalists or, for that matter, to become communicators in other ways, as screenwriters, for instance.

***CPR**: Is there something inherently appealing to the liberal about that kind of profession?*

Farah: Evidently there is. In my case, I entered journalism while I was still politically on the left. I became involved in journalism — and a lot of people in my generation chose journalism as a profession — after Watergate. We were inspired by Woodward and Bernstein, by their ability to dethrone a sitting president of the United States. Those of us on the left had been out in the streets protesting the Vietnam war and involved in civil rights and a variety of other issues and we had achieved a small amount of success that way. But Woodward and Bernstein, two police reporters for *The Washington Post*, achieved something so profound that it inspired a whole generation of people to be attracted to the journalism profession.

***CPR**: Does journalism, then, attract people who dislike the world as they find it —people who see journalism as a means of changing it or of tearing it down?*

Farah: That's probably true. A lot of people attracted to this profession want to attack the establishment. But the problem with that idea — if you're trying to explain a predominance of liberals in the profession — is that today the liberal media is very much a *part* of the establishment and contributes enormously to perpetuating it — to perpetuating government bureaucracy and the statist mentality that pervades Washington and Sacramento. Look at our competitor, *The Sacramento Bee*. If they are not a part of the establishment, then I don't know who is. The same is true of with the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. Today, the few, struggling voices out there actively attacking the establishment are conservative.

***CPR**: Still, as you say, conservatives seem more interested in professions other than journalism. How will you find more conservative writers and editors?*

Farah: I don't plan to stack the newsroom exclusively with conservatives. Number one, I don't think it would be possible to do that because there *is* a shortage of conservative journalists. And number two, we'd be guilty of what we're trying to change. I don't want rigid uniformity of opinion in the newsroom. I want to present the news in a fair, balanced way. I want to have stories that other newspapers may not be interested in tackling because of their own skewed perspective. We *do* need to attract at least some journalists who aren't committed socialists, who are at least open-minded to conservative ideas and proposals on issues. As part of our effort to find them, we are working with Stan Evans' National Journalism Center in Washington, D.C. And some universities are actually producing fine journalists who aren't liberals. The Center for Defense Journalism at Boston University under H. Joachim Maitre, dean of the communication school and a former defector from Eastern Europe, focuses on teaching how to cover defense issues. Maitre and others like him around the country are providing alternatives to the Columbia journalism school and to the larger establishment journalism schools that tend to produce mainly reporters and editors who fit the liberal mold.

***CPR**: Earlier, you said the* Union *would provide a distinct, alternative identity. How would you describe it?*

Farah: We are going to be the anti-establishment

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paper in Sacramento, the paper that challenges the conventional wisdom in the state capital. Our editorial pages will be conservative. We will be true to free-market principles. We will be prolife, which is unusual for any newspaper across the country. And a certain amount of that will carry over into how we deal with the news. That's not to say that when we write about abortion we won't present all sides of the issue. We will. But I think it will be obvious to our readers that our perspective differs from that of our competition. The major difference is that we *will* present all sides of this issue and the contrast will make it obvious just how pronounced a point of view on abortion our competition's news columns convey.

***CPR**: In that it ignores things?*

Farah: Exactly. For instance, several Operation Rescue people were sentenced recently to long jail terms here ranging up to six months for blocking abortion clinics. Our competition ran only brief mentions of it in their news columns. It struck me that had these people been sentenced for this kind of term because of civil disobedience over civil rights issues, the *Bee* would have been championing their cause — doing jailhouse interviews with them and focusing on their families and how they are coping without their husbands and wives who are in jail. So we went out and we did what *they* would have done had the issue been different. We interviewed the wives and the rescuers in jail and we presented *their* side of the story — a human interest story about the rescuers. I might point out that we also interviewed, to counterbalance that, the head of California NOW and a spokesman for the clinic they had been blocking and all that was included in the article. The point is, we did a story most of the media would not have touched in a million years. It would never have occurred to any *Bee* editor or *Bee* reporter that there might be a human interest story there about these folks who were putting so much on the line for their personal convictions.

***CPR**: Some conservatives would have trouble agreeing that prolife is a conservative position. They consider laws against abortion another form of Big-Brother government that conservatives ought to resist, not embrace. How do you answer that?*

Farah: I think prolife people see them as laws protecting life rather than laws that are restrictive. The media portray abortion laws as personally restrictive, but there is another way to look at them — as laws protecting the unborn child. Prolifers consider that to be the more important issue. Life takes priority over convenience.

***CPR**: The* Union *will, of course, cover more that just politics. How would you describe the* Union*'s approach to the arts, entertainment — the culture?*

Farah: These subjects, of course, have been among my foremost concerns for the last couple of years. *Between the Lines* focuses almost entirely upon Hollywood — upon the political and moral implications of what goes on there.

I have not yet become deeply involved in the *Union*'s entertainment coverage, although that will be one of my priorities in the coming months. Right now, we are focusing on shaping up the editorial page, the news pages, and our business coverage. Soon, by the way, we will be devoting a lot more attention to local and state business issues, which will be a major interest of the paper.

But with regard to the entertainment section, we have a movie critic named Mick Martin who, I think, is quite atypical. As an example of the difference between our entertainment coverage and what the *Bee* and *Los Angeles Times* might provide, I would mention the terrific family perspective Mick brings to his writing. His reviews consider whether or not a movie is one that parents would want their kids to see, and whether it attacks or supports family values. That's obviously lacking in most of the establishment press. Most movie and TV critics share the perspectives and prejudices of the entertainment industry establishment — the perspectives and prejudices of the very people they are *supposed* to be criticizing. So, again, the *Union* will take the anti-establishment view.

***CPR**: Can people receive the* Union *outside Sacramento?*

Farah: During the coming year, we will be exploring the possibility of adding a new statewide edition of the *Union* geared for people outside the Sacramento area. But, for now, readers can begin receiving the *Union* by mail for $15 per month for a weekly subscription, including Sunday, or, for $12 per month, they will receive Saturday and Sunday only. Write or call *The Sacramento Union* at 301 Capitol Mall, Sacramento, California, 95814, (916)442-2222. CPR

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Criticus

Diacritical Nihilism

G. B. Tennyson

THE GOOD news is that, at last report, the Germans are retaining their umlaut, the Spanish their tilde, the Portuguese theirs, and, one hopes, all others their own idiosyncratic diacritical and accent marks.

The bad news is that the French are dropping their circumflex.

These are mournful tidings. It's not so much that the circumflex matters in itself, though anyone who has troubled to learn to place it neatly over words like *âge*, *rôle*, *île*, and *château* understandably enjoys that little frisson of pleasure in knowing that he knows. Conversely, not knowing and having to look it up is almost religiously humbling and reminds one of derelictions from student days, the things left undone that we ought to have done.

But admittedly, the circumflex doesn't greatly affect anything that happens in French today, though a specialist may well be able to find two otherwise identical words distinguished only by one's having the circumflex. The English equivalent lies perhaps in knowing how to pronounce Shrewsbury (it's *SHROWSb'ry*) or any of the countless other unphonetically spelled place names in the British Isles, a pastime that Americans less often indulge in, though we must not forget Cairo (*CAYro*), or Biloxi (*BillUXi*), or, as I recently learned, Natchitoches (*NAKatish!*), or even, as seems self-evident to Americans but not to New Yorkers or other foreigners, Houston (*HUGHSton*).

BUT IN the main English has abandoned or mislaid most of those outward and visible signs that give so many other languages their piquancy. The glorious diaeresis (old spelling) died at least a generation ago by my reckoning, and was shortly followed by the death of most hyphens: where once we had *coöperation*, we then had *co-operation*, and now have the unsightly *cooperation*, which ought to mean something like "in the state or condition of a barrel maker," but alas it simply means old fashioned coöperation.

And those grand old ligatures like æ and œ have vanished from American usage and are hanging on in British only by the linguistic equivalent of stretched tendons, appropriately because they survive there chiefly in medical terms (diarrhœa, leukæmia); and in any case most fonts no longer carry them as true ligatures but must print them simply as digraphs, two separate letters. And who has lately

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seen the once proud double lowercase ligature *ff*, as, say, *ff*oulkes, most striking when it occurs in the first words in a sentence?

INDEED, ALL that is left our impoverished tongue is the apostrophe, and if the present crop of college students is any guide, the apostrophe is doomed in both of its once quite serviceable guises, i.e., as a possessive (John's, mother's) and as a mark of an omitted letter (hasn't, it's). Our learned young are capable of writing without any sense of shame things like: "Johns mothers hat hasnt its original color because its faded."

Which brings one back to the circumflex. It too served the function of indicating a missing letter, normally "s", and of marking a pronunciation, normally a long vowel, as for example *pâté*, (Old French, *pastee*; cf. English *paste*, Italian *pasta*).

But unlike the apostrophe in, say, *haven't,* the missing letter in French could never be restored as in English it could be in *have not.* The sign of the missing letter in French was an historical marker and reminder: once this word had an "s" in this spot, hence the vowel is lengthened. *Château* was once *chasteau* (cf. English *castle*).

WHEN ENGLISH sought to do something similar, as it did rather arbitrarily in *doubt*, it simply used a fancied old spelling but didn't pronounce the intrusive silent letter, to the eternal confusion of outsiders, rather like knowing how to pronounce Shrewsbury.

The French with their superior logic spelled the word as it was sounded (or reasonably close to it) and marked the silent letter with what some saw as a little steeple,

others as a little hat. It was both elegant and thoughtful of them, and their dropping it is for lovers of tradition an act of linguistic outrage.

Which in turn brings us to more sinister matters than the lamented circumflex, namely, who owns language and who has the right to change it. The French rely on the *Académie Française.* (I use the estimable acute accent in the first of these words and the even more ravishing cedilla in the second, piteously hopeful that both shall still be flourishing after all readers of these words are dead, and if there's any doubt about it, we should do ourselves in at once lest we find ourselves condemned to live in a world that knows not these linguistic ornaments.)

English speakers thoughout the world have long disdained what they see as the tyranny of a group of so-called "immortals" passing hidebound judgment on the acceptability of this or that language usage and have relied on the native genius of the language to accommodate change, slowing it where necessary, accepting the new where desirable, in general keeping the language current and robust.

THAT FREEDOM, we tell ourselves, is what gives English its vigor, its universality, its international appeal. (I suspect the real reason for the appeal is in fact economic, and that non-native speakers would cheerfully rid themselves of the preposterously unphonetic and not especially grammatically coherent English language if only commerce would permit it, but that's another matter.) But how free is English and in what areas? The issue of who decides the cir-

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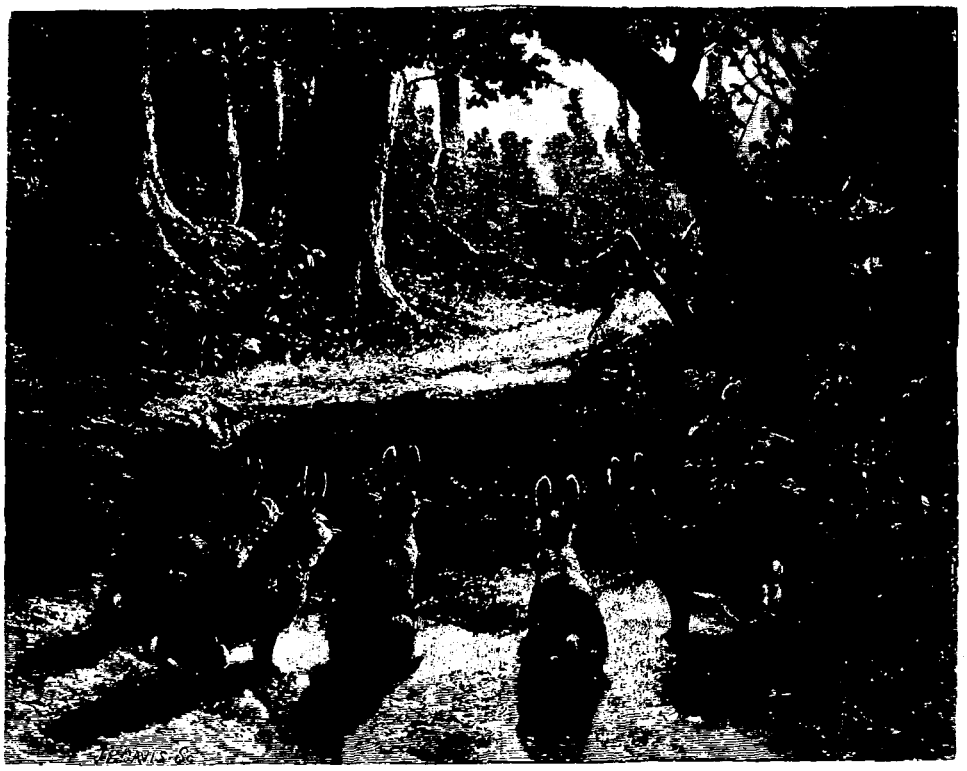

cumflexes of English, so to speak, is no longer as simple as it seems.

LINGUISTICIANS (used here to designate those who speak about language as opposed to linguists who speak languages) have been telling us since early in the century that change is the one constant in language, that indeed the history of language is little more than a record of change.

For example, no one now speaks, and only a few scholars understand, Anglo-Saxon from which modern English descends. From the awareness of the ever-changing nature of language, linguisticians have tended to make the further assumption that all language change is good. Indeed, many have adapted for language change the now prohibited old-boy jocularity about rape, urging that since change is inevitable, we should relax and enjoy it. Some even seem to say that we should linguistically tart up and roam the back streets of language looking for the latest verbal cut and thrust. But these are mere neophiliacs and, though they are part of the problem, they are no longer the greater part of the problem.

The greater part of the problem is something peculiar to the twentieth century, something that comes along with totalitarianism and that makes the *Académie Française* look very benign indeed. This is the attempt to manipulate language for political purposes. We are pleased to think that such efforts were confined to the likes of Dr. Goebbels and the (former?) editors of *Pravda*. Not so. But what are these manipulations and who is doing the manipulating? That will be the subject of our discourse next time. And while you are waiting, take a moment to write to the 40 immortals of the *Académie Française* protesting the banishment of you know what. CPR

BOOKS

Politics Goes Hollywood

The Good, the Bad, and the Famous: Celebrities Playing Politics, by Len Sherman, Carol Publishing Group, 235 pp., $18.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Dan Schnur

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM says that public confidence in politicians is at an all-time low. (No, really.)

Actually, if conventional wisdom didn't have quite such good manners, it would say that on a scale of trustworthiness, politicians rank somewhere between Saddam Hussein and George Steinbrenner. (And if conventional wisdom were *really* rude, it would say that given the choice between a conversation with their congressman and a night with Rosanne Barr...well, never mind.)

So people hate politicians. Big news. So who have the American people chosen as their role models? Athletes and entertainers. You know, Madonna, Michael Jordan, Tom Cruise, the usual.

Not that there's anything new about this either. Fifty years ago, kids wanted to be Babe Ruth or Gary Cooper. No one wanted to grow up to be Herbert Hoover. (Except maybe Walter Mondale, who actually *did* grow up to be Herbert Hoover.)

SO WHEN Tom Hayden or Willie Brown needs credible spokesmen to shill for his favorite causes, where does he turn? To other politicians? To recognized experts in the relevant field? No, they turn to

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people they know command the attention of the audience. You've seen the ads. Jack Lemmon and James Garner against Propositions 118 and 119. Jane Fonda and Jeff Bridges for the Hayden Initiative.

IT DOESN'T stop there, either. Look hard enough, and you can find a celebrity carrying on about just about anything. Martin Sheen gets elected mayor of Malibu and declares it a "nuclear-free zone"; Morgan Fairchild and Whoopi Goldberg march to support abortion. And everybody, it seems, who ever test-read for a soap commercial was running around chirping about Earth Day.

The cameramen fight for position to film the movie star talking politics, but they also know that no one wants the sound to go with the pictures.

The problem is, a lot of people actually pay attention to these celebrities. We all know they don't have the foggiest idea what they're talking about. (Want a real thrill? Listen to *Sting* talking about global warming sometime.) But they are famous, so they get an audience anyway.

This is the premise addressed by Len Sherman in his new book, *The Good, the Bad, and the Famous; Celebrities Playing Politics*. Sherman talks to politicians, he talks to journalists, he talks to consultants, and they all agree on one thing: that these celebrities, no matter how well-informed they might be, should not be in any kind of position to influence public policy.

Most other, non-famous people also seem to realize what idiocy it all is and, even while they're watching, know better than to listen. In other words, the cameramen fight for position to film the movie star talking politics, but they also know that no one wants the sound to go with the pictures.

Example: a few years back, our friend Miss Fonda, along with Jessica Lange and Sissy Spacek, were invited by the House Democrat Caucus on Agriculture to testify on the plight of the family farm. (Why? Because they had each appeared in movies pretending to be farm wives.) But even though Jessica Lange got more coverage than the Secretary of Agriculture, no one paid any attention to what she was actually saying.

AND WHAT pearls of wisdom would the people of America have heard if they had been listening? Let's eavesdrop for a moment on Hanoi Jane explaining precisely what, besides her part in a farm movie, qualified her to testify:

"Perhaps I felt at home with these people because, as far back as I can remember, my father had loved to plow the fields and plant and grow things....[H]e always felt a kinship with rural America, and maybe that was why, of all, he loved Thom Joad in *Grapes of Wrath* the most....[T]hat's the most wonderful part of our profession...that it exposes us to these realities and allows us to be affected...."

Now let's think about this for a minute. Extend this technique to its logical conclusion, and imagine the possibilities. Warren Beatty and Michael Keaton debating the crime bill. After all, who is better than Dick Tracy and Batman to crack down on crime? How about William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy on the space program? Or maybe President Bush could send Charlton "Moses" Heston to the Middle East to negotiate some kind of settlement.

Unfortunately, there is a growing willingness among politicians to humor these entertainers, mostly because of the media attention they attract. (Rosanne Barr got more press for mangling the national anthem than most congressmen get in a lifetime.)

And since politicians look for cameras the way a junkie looks for a clean needle, it's inevitable that they'd start finding their way toward the edges of that spotlight.

So celebrities and politicians start listening to each other, and what ultimately happens is that someone like Warren Beatty becomes a serious advisor to a presidential candidate. At least until that candidate starts pretending to be Warren Beatty.

It would have been easy for Sherman to put together his whole book just by letting a tape recorder run while a bunch of singers and actors babble about their role in solving the world's problems. And to his credit, he does make an effort to talk to a few actors who have become legitimately involved in their causes. He talks to John Randolph, who was blacklisted from Hollywood for several years during the

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McCarthy era. He spends time with a few other celebrities, whose involvement with their causes, for better or worse, does run a bit deeper and more genuine.

SHERMAN TRIES to be fair to these people. He really does. He's a liberal himself and it probably breaks his heart to see his favorite causes trivialized by a group of pampered, self-important entertainers. Finally, though, he realizes the sheer lunacy of it all, gives them the skewering they deserve, and gives up to interview a few real politicians about the declining public trust.

Until Sherman does give up, *The Good, the Bad, and the Famous* is not a bad reality check for anyone who's just forced himself to sit through the Hayden Initiative's new commercial, or, for that matter, who's ever seen this type of cross-pollination in action at all.

It's not Machiavelli, but if you've just finished Kevin Phillips or Robert Caro, and you're getting ready for the new Nixon book, it's not a bad resting place. No heavy lifting required. And, as I said, Sherman is a liberal. Watching them trying to defend one another is good, clean fun any old time.

Outdoing Bonaparte's Shackles

If No News, Send Rumors: Anecdotes of American Journalism, by Stephen Bates, St. Martin's Press, 318 pp., $18.95 cloth.

Reviewed by John C. Allen III

THE TITLE of this very enjoyable and educational work says it all. It comes from a Chicago newspaper editor's actual instructions to his reporter at the front lines during the Civil War, and, as the book makes clear, the attitude they convey has characterized the American news business through its whole, long history.

IN SKETCHING more than three centuries of American journalism, Stephen Bates presents a comprehensive history — his own remarks to the contrary in the introduction notwithstanding — a history modern in its format. It is anecdotal, written in soundbytes — just the thing for a generation with the span of attention of a mayfly and unable, in any case, to contemplate anything deeply. They might actually learn from this work.

It is anecdotal, written in soundbytes — just the thing for a generation with the span of attention of a mayfly.

Bates lets his subjects — the individuals who "create" the news — speak for themselves, exposing, in the process, their incredible mix of situational ethics, penchant for inaccuracy, and egotistical self-absorption.

He also quotes critics of the media. No one is spared — publishers, editors, reporters, columnists — beginning with the first newspaper that appeared in America on the streets of Boston — *Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick*. The book is not, however, organized chronologically, but according to subject. For instance, Bates quotes "Presidents on the Press":

"The newspapers of our country by their abandoned spirit of falsehood have more effectually destroyed the utility of the press than all the shackles devised by Bonaparte." — Thomas Jefferson

"Sons of bitches." — Ronald Reagan, after reporters persistently asked questions during a no-questions-allowed photo session. The remark was picked up by an open microphone.

And from "Press on the Press":

"Reporting is not a dignified profession for which men will invest the time and the cost of an education, but an underpaid, insecure, anonymous form of drudgery, conducted on catch-as-catch-can principles." — Walter Lippman, columnist.

Bates' exposé is straightforward, funny, and, at times, quite thoughtful and poignant. It should be in every high school classroom in America so that young people whose exposure to the media is just beginning can get a truthful glimpse of what and who they are being exposed to. They might, one hopes, thereby avoid growing up deifying, as too often happens today, this quite human, mistake-prone, and often destructive industry.

READING *IF No News, Send Rumors* would help them understand what moved Alexander Solzhenitsyn to write: "The press has become the greatest power within the Western countries, more powerful than the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary....By what law has it been elected and to whom is it responsible?" CR

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Hollywood's Strange Compulsion

(Continued from page 15)

tender souls who are involved in the motion picture business. In the years to come, we should try investing less energy in attacking left-wing movies, and investing more in making some quality right-wing movies once in a while — something a little better, a little more intellectually challenging, perhaps, than *Top Gun* or *Rambo*. Certainly there are subjects galore suitable for conservative film makers.

TO CONCLUDE, I'd like to say a word specifically to those of us who were once on the left. I always feel personally insulted, and we should all feel insulted, when people imply that, somehow, moving away from the left has involved an abandonment of idealism. *You once were an idealist, you once were compassionate, and now look: you're selfish, conservative.* We can't accept that anymore. We should make the case that the most passionate, idealistic cause for all of humanity is still the cause of America, is still the cause of freedom, and that this great country still represents, as it did in Lincoln's day, man's last, best hope on earth.

Questions Following Mr. Medved's Speech

Q: If The Hunt for Red October, *and films like it, are so successful, why was it so difficult to get the film made?*

A: There was opposition to the politics in the book and, of course, the politics is 'way toned down on the screen. They even added a disclaimer at the beginning that said all of these events took place before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. They changed significant elements in the book to make it more acceptable to the left-wing censors at Paramount. About 10 years ago, I did a pitch meeting for an anti-Soviet kind of action-adventure picture — called *First Strike* — that I had conceived. The meeting was with one of the biggest producers in Hollywood. He had expressed interest in my work, so I gave a great, rousing pitch, and he said, "you know, I think your project is very commercial and if it ever gets made it will make a lot of money. But I hope it never gets made and I'll never have anything to do with making it because I think it is wrong."

In Hollywood, people's political passions sometimes override *even* their pocketbooks. That's what I was talking about in "Does Hollywood Hate Religion?", a piece in the July 1990 *Readers' Digest*. Hollywood's hatred of religion is so profound that even though producers recognize by now that these anti-clerical and anti-religious projects all lose at the box office they still churn them out.

Q: UCLA Associate Professor Kathryn Montgomery wrote a book called Target: Prime Time — Advocacy Groups and Entertainment T.V. *It described the influence that various pressure groups, such as NOW, gain in Hollywood and the film industry through boycotts, letter-writing campaigns, and other techniques. Are these groups really effective?*

A: Yes, and it's amazing how open producers will be in acknowledging that influence. For instance, a majority of serious TV shows have now pledged publicly to include environmental messages in at least every other episode. And, of course, the whole business is sold under the guise that these environmental messages are non-political.

Again, I would say that rather than decrying the success of gay or environmental or other organizations in making their agenda seem non-political, people with other agendas should try to inject some balance onto the scene. A left-liberal organization called FAIR — Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting — arose as a counterweight to the conservative group AIM — Accuracy in Media — and this counterweight has been nearly as effective as AIM. Conservatives should create their own counterweights on a range of issues. One group doing a good job is Movie Guide, an organization of evangelical Christians based in Atlanta set up to influence the studios in key ways. They have been effective because they get people to write letters to the studios. Studio heads receive shockingly few letters. You would be amazed — 50 letters can be an earthquake. They'll listen to that; it makes a difference. It is not the way it is with TV where network TV shows sometimes receive lots of letters. In the movie business, letter-writing campaigns of the kind put together by Movie Guide can have an effect.

Q: Protests against The Last Temptation of Christ *were criticized as attempts to stifle free expression. But when an independent producer made a film about Hol-*

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lywood drug abuse — a film about John Belushi called Wired *— the Hollywood establishment pretty well killed it. It got almost no national distribution.*

A: I remarked at the time that Hollywood was far more willing to accept a disrespectful treatment of Jesus than a disrespectful treatment of John Belushi. When I said that, a friend pointed out the reason for this very different reaction was that John Belushi had more friends in the business than Jesus.

The issue of Hollywood's treatment of religion and religious values, it seems to me, is particularly ripe for public discussion. Ferment *is* beginning in this regard. Several outside-of-Hollywood organizations have raised significant money and significant talent to present movies with positive religious themes. These movies are not going to be like the ones Billy Graham has made the last few years, that end with an advertisement for God, asking people to come forward to the screen and declare themselves. They will be more like the movies Hollywood used to make, such as *Going My Way* or *Boys' Town* or even *The Ten Commandments* or *Ben Hur*. Lots of fine movies once featured stars such as Pat O'Brien or Bing Crosby or Spencer Tracy playing loveable clerics and gave audiences a chance to see that religion could be a positive influence on people's lives. More films like these will be made, films that will come from outside Hollywood.

Q: I remember reading Ben Stein a couple of years ago speculating that Hollywood would see a religious revival because so many people in the movie business who had been addicts of one sort or another had received treatment with a religious emphasis. Is there anything to Stein's speculation?

A: Ben Stein makes a lot of interesting points. In his book *The View From Sunset Boulevard*, he says that one of the reasons businessmen are so routinely trashed in Hollywood movies is that the only experience of business most screenwriters have is with producers who really are rapacious, unethical, and utterly unscrupulous capitalist exploiters. And the screenwriters assume this is true of all businessmen.

In any event, the Twelve Step Program made famous by Alcoholics Anonymous has been used by many Hollywood celebrities and it does emphasize belief in a higher power and religious values. I know one major star who has been through the Twelve Step Program and who is a religious believer. He confided to me his big secret: that he has also changed his political thinking and even voted for Bush. But he won't go public with it. That recalls the problem we touched on earlier: how can an actor go forward with his career, if he loses the respect of his peers by conceding that he might be, Heaven forbid, a Republican! It is certainly much worse in Hollywood terms to admit you are a Republican than to admit you are a substance abuser.

This is obviously a long-term problem, though some progress has been made — with, for instance, Joe Farah's publication *Between the Lines*. Frankly, I am shocked by how many people in the business are aware of it and hate it and use it and say it is a prime example of a new McCarthyism. They'll be talking about "Farah-ism" soon I suppose. Also, David Horowitz's Foundation for the Study of Popular Culture was an attempt to organize an alternative presence in the film community.

Obviously, things haven't turned around yet. But, to conclude, I would say that, while we are not at the end, or even at the beginning of the end of that project, we are, perhaps, to paraphrase Churchill, at the end of the beginning. We can only look forward to better times ahead. CPR

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Unmasking the Left in Irvine

(Continued from page 19)

seat. The requisite number of signatures had been filed shortly after the June election on what is by state law a confidential petition for a special election for the seat. The Agran majority voted to make the names of the petitioners public, thereby making them vulnerable to legal challenge by Gaido. When the Sheridan Council later refused to seat Gaido or release the petitions at its first meeting in July, Gaido filed suit against Irvine. The Agran forces apparently are now embarking on another cycle of costly litigiousness, unwilling simply to leave the matter to the voters in a special election.

For her part, Sheridan's goals are healing the city of the divisiveness Agran fostered and reversing the politicization of nearly every aspect of Irvine life, including a return to the pre-Agran city manager form of government. Ken Grubbs, the editorial page editor of the *Orange County Register*, said of the first Sheridan-run Council meeting: "It was like listening to real people again." Manning calls it a "return to normalcy in local government."

ARE THERE other Agrans out there who are similarly vulnerable? The membership of the Center for Innovative Diplomacy would suggest that there is no dearth of local officials who share Agran's outlook, if not his crude *modus operandi*. And Howard Klein, whose lawsuit first sparked the anti-Agran *jihad*, received a letter from Santa Monica after the Agran results were in. "Now that you cleaned out Irvine," the writer implored, "come up and clean out Santa Monica."

Certainly Agran's Irvine exhibited characteristics on display in other locales. Writing about present-day Berkeley in their book *Destructive Generation*, David Horowitz and Peter Collier craft an account eerily evocative of Agranism:

"For the radical elite that controls city politics, the question of what Berkeley is supposed to be all about is settled. It is about the symbolism of sister cities and foreign policy 'positions' — a mix of third world romance and anti-Americanism recycled from the '60s; and, more significantly, it is about power — how to seize and redistribute it, how to create new relationships to it among the populace, and how to use it to further the radical vision. For this elite, Berkeley is a radical demonstration project — a 'beacon,' to use a favorite term of the local left for the rest of the country. And, indeed, the Berkeley experiment has become an inspiring example for Madison, Santa Monica, Burlington, and other would-be 'socialist' towns across the country....Many residents, it seems, who are otherwise quite progressive don't want to live inside a metaphor. There is bitter self-realization in the graffito that recently appeared on one of the city's walls: 'Berkeley — too small to be a nation-state; too big to be an insane asylum.'

"Radicals have built a formidable political machine in Berkeley, but in the process they have also caused disillusionment on the part of citizens who believe that the new machine has no soul."

TO REPUBLICANS who may want to encourage and capitalize politically on this well of disillusionment, Klein's advice is "find an East Coast investigative journalist." And Greener adds, "Figure out how the Democrats win," which, of course, may be another way of saying the same thing. CPR

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will help ensure that all viewpoints are placed before the public."
- Hon. George Deukmejian

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Worth Repeating

Tom Hayden and the Great Killer Watermelon

by Warren T. Brookes

SOME ARE calling it Big Green. I would call it Charlie Brown's Great Killer Watermelon — dark green on the outside, red on the inside — less to denote its political agenda than its likely result in diminished economic prosperity.

If interpreted strictly, [the] Hayden [initiative] would force the banning of perhaps two-thirds of all pesticides now used in a state which now produces 50 percent of all U.S fresh vegetables and fruit. That is because it would ban any pesticide which has been shown to have caused cancer in rodent tests, regardless of the tolerances now allowed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Bear in mind these are all chemicals which have already been shown to cause *no harm* to animals at from 1,000 to 10,000 the levels of even maximum allowable human exposure.

While Big Green retains that already mammoth margin of safety, it adds a "bright new line" standard of "significant risk" as anything contributing "to a risk of cancer in the exposed population which exceeds the rate of one in a million, utilizing the most conservative risk assessment model."

AS ANY biologist or statistician in this room could tell you, one in a million is biologically *zero risk*. The risk of an airplane falling on this hotel and killing you is about three in a million. Sitting through this speech for the average person is about ten in a million — and for me giving it is about two in 100,000. Even so, it may surprise you to know that virtually all of the prospectively banned chemicals could easily pass that one in one million standard, were it not that the "most conservative risk assessment model" assumes thousands of times higher levels of chemical exposure than actually take place. You would never know this from the hysterical language of the petition to place the initiative on the ballot. "Each year millions of pounds of pesticides are used in California and eventually contaminate the food chain, drinking water supply, ocean, air, soil, and ecosystem. Many of these pesticides present clear hazards to human life and health."

If that is really the case, why have all of the major tumors associated with these chemicals been declining not only here, but in Europe where they use four times as much of these chemicals per acre? And why are California consumers so reluctant to put their green money where their green mouth is? Polls show up to eight percent [of consumers] *might* prefer organic foods, but only if they didn't have to pay any more for them. Are they just foolish risk-takers, or are they making a rational risk-benefit assessment? The nation's top food safety official, Harvard microbiologist Dr. Robert Scheuplein of the Food and Drug Administration, thinks they are perfectly rational. He has studied this issue for 20 years and has concluded that the effective cancer risk from pesticide residues is 0.0000076.

WHEN I asked him at a Hudson Institute Conference last April what that meant as a percentage of all 500,000 cancer deaths, he said, "Oh, about .01 percent." I said, "You mean less than 50, nationwide?" "Oh, much less than that," he said. "Less than 40?" I pressed. "Oh, much less than that," he said. "Well, give me a number," I pushed. "No, I won't," he said, "because I don't honestly believe anyone has ever died of ingesting pesticide residues on food!"

Harvard scientist William Clark, in *Societal Risk Assessment: How Safe is Safe Enough?*, likened this process to the Inquisition, which:

> *became the growth industry of its day, offering exciting work, rapid advancement and wide recognition to its professional and technical workers. Its creative and energetic efforts to create a witch-free world unearthed dangers in the most unlikely places; the rates of witch identification, assessment, and evaluation soared. By the dawn of the Enlightenment, witches had virtually been eliminated from Europe and North America. Crop failures, disease, and general misfortune had not. And more than half a million people had been burned at the stake largely for "crimes they committed in someone else's dreams."* CPR

Excerpted from remarks made by Warren T. Brookes, Detroit News *national syndicated economic columnist, at a Pacific Research Institute luncheon, July 26, 1990, in San Francisco. Full transcripts are available from the P.R.I., 177 Post St., San Francisco, CA, 94108, 415/989-0833.*

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